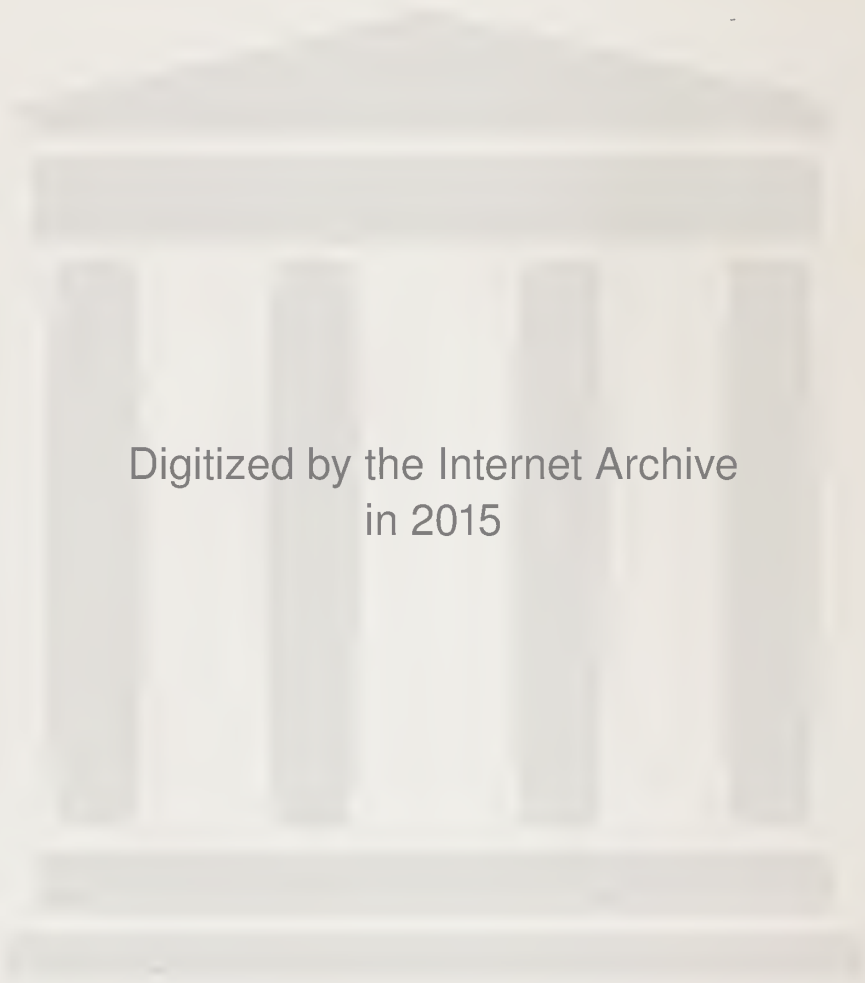
ART IN THE HOUSE



DR. J. VON FALKE.

C. C. PERKINS.





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by

JACOB von FALKE

edited with notes by

Charles C. Perkins

1878.

L. PRANG & CO. BOSTON.



ART IN THE HOUSE.

HISTORICAL, CRITICAL, AND ÆSTHETICAL STUDIES
ON THE DECORATION AND FURNISHING
OF THE DWELLING.

BY

JACOB VON FALKE,
VICE-DIRECTOR OF THE AUSTRIAN MUSEUM OF ART AND INDUSTRY
AT VIENNA.

AUTHORIZED AMERICAN EDITION,
TRANSLATED FROM THE THIRD GERMAN EDITION.
EDITED, WITH NOTES,

BY

CHARLES C. PERKINS, M. A.,
AUTHOR OF "TUSCAN AND ITALIAN SCULPTORS," ETC.; CORRESPONDING MEMBER
OF THE FRENCH INSTITUTE.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

DR. FALKE'S book opens with an account of the Greco-Roman house as the most perfect type of the antique dwelling in plan, construction, and decoration. We are quite sure that while on all these points he rightly considers it to be more richly suggestive than any older house forms, such as those of Egypt and Assyria, he did not mean his readers to infer that he thought them unworthy of consideration, for they are confessedly marked by a simplicity, dignity, and solidity of construction, and a correct use of decoration, which give them a high place in the building systems of the world. In order, therefore, to make Dr. Falke's excellent work more historically complete, we have ventured to preface it with a brief description of the Egyptian and Assyrian house, from which some of the most marked features of the Greco-Roman were derived.

Influence of climate and physical geography on building forms.

We find, in all countries, that building forms are dictated by and adapted to the exigencies of climate. That of the valley of the Nile was so peculiarly delightful, the sky so serene, the air so tempered, that its inhabitants might well have regarded artificial habitations as a superfluous luxury; but the constructive instinct is strong in man, and nowhere did it express itself in simpler, more enduring, and more majestic forms than in Egypt. As in the landscape, so in architecture the horizontal line dominates, uniting them

harmoniously. In nature it is broken only by the palm-tree, in man's work only by the pyramid. The connection between the two is made even more evident by the architectural and ornamental use of vegetable forms; for as the papyrus and the lotus grow by the river-side, so their stone counterparts grow about the temple in columns, whose ribbed shafts are formed of their stalks bound together, and whose capitals are made of their buds and flowers painted in natural colors. The Egyptians thus took leaves from the book of Nature, but though they imitated her forms and adapted them to their use, they could not, with all their technical skill, make the ceilings of their palace chambers as resplendent as the sky above their heads, nor color their walls with hues to match those which made the daily rising and setting of the sun-god glorious, nor light them with lamps a tithe as brilliant as the stars which looked down upon them from the midnight heavens.

They professed, in view of the brevity of life, to regard their dwellings as mere "wayside inns," and to consider it therefore a matter of comparative indifference how they were constructed; and indeed the free air, the green valley cut off from the arid desert by the Libyan hills, the boat upon the sacred river, might well have seemed to the Egyptians better to inhabit, than halls however spacious and splendid: but when death shut out all the wonders of nature from their eyes, the king needed his Pyramid, and the rich man his Mastaba or his Hypogee, for in these his embalmed body was to wait during long ages, while his spirit accomplished its appointed series of transmigrations. The poor peasant alone found no safer abiding-place in death than that which he had known in life; for as he had dwelt in a hut of reeds, he was called upon to sleep his long sleep under the desert sand, which the simoom might scatter or the jackal and the hyena dig away.

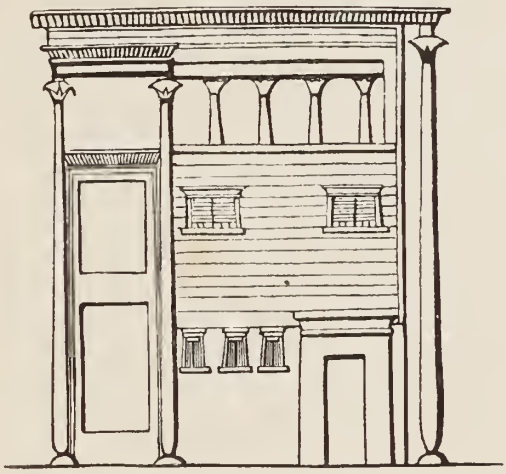
Egyptian houses.

Notwithstanding these professions of indifference as to their earthly dwelling-places, in Egypt as elsewhere the rich and great lavished wealth upon their palaces and great houses. The streets of Thebes, Memphis, and Heliopolis were bor-

dered with houses generally but two, though sometimes, according to Diodorus Siculus, four or five stories high; houses wide-spread and flat-roofed, and, though like all Oriental dwellings of plain and blank exterior, embellished within with the utmost luxury and magnificence. They were entered through a portico or porch, over which was inscribed some short sentence of friendly import, a mode of giving mute welcome to the visitor afterwards adopted by the Greeks and Romans. The portico or vestibule gave entrance to an hypæthral court (that is, a court with an opening in the middle of the roof, over which an awning could be drawn to keep out the noonday sun) with a fountain or tank in its centre, like the Roman impluvium. Trees were planted around this court, which, with its projecting roof supported upon columns, very much resembled the Greek and Roman atrium. Three doorways, the central one of which was higher and wider than the other two, as in some Egyptian "pylons" or gateways, led from it into an adjoining court, which like the first had chambers opening out of it. These chambers were sometimes used as store-rooms, but occasionally those around the second court were occupied, as in modern Turkish houses, by the women and children. We read in the "Romance of the Two Brothers,"[1] that in the days of Rameses the Great (B. C. 1500), Bataou, having transformed himself into an Apis or Sacred Bull, entered the harem of the king to reproach his faithless wife with her perfidy, which he could hardly have

General plan.

Fig. 1.



[1] Written by the Royal Scribe Ema. Translated by M. E. de Rougé, and first published in the *Revue Archæologique* for 1852, pp. 385 et seq.

done in his abnormal shape, had it been situated in the second story and approached by a staircase. In second-class houses such an arrangement commonly prevailed. They had but one court on the lower floor, and on the upper a single chamber, opening on a flat roof surrounded with a parapet of masonry, and overlooked by a tower built on one side of the house. Here, fanned by a double triangular sail called a "melcaf," the inhabitants of the house slept away the hot noon hours and the summer nights.

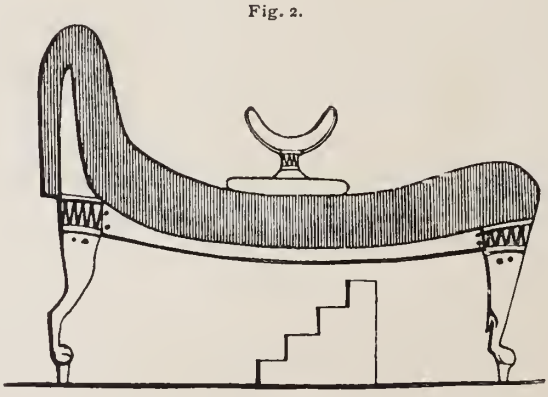
Egyptian palaces.

The description which we have given of Egyptian houses in general applies also to palaces, whose plan was identical, though on a far grander scale. Approached, like temples, through avenues of human or ram headed sphinxes, they consisted of a series of courts surrounded by colonnades, to which "pylons" of colossal proportions gave entrance, and of many small chambers occupied by the king, his wives and children, and the officers of his household with their attendants. There were also several sanctuaries dedicated to as many divinities, where the king, who was deified during life, worshipped his own image as well as the images of his ancestors, and took part in other sacred rites.

Egyptian furniture.

The walls of courts and rooms, both in palaces and private dwellings, were painted with brilliant colors, and the floors were covered with woven mats and the skins of wild animals, upon which the inmates often slept with their heads propped upon wooden head-rests. These were especially adapted to the preservation of the elaborate coiffures so much in fashion among the women during the nineteenth and twentieth dynasties. While some lay upon the floor, others

Fig. 2.

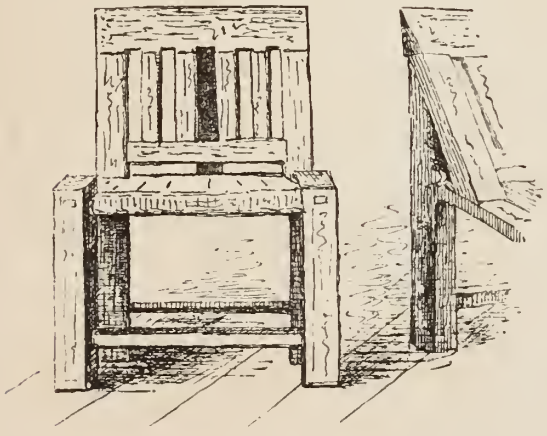


reposed upon straight couches richly inlaid, which were often lion-shaped, that is, the head, back, and tail of the animal formed the body of the couch, and its legs the supports (Fig. 2). The houses of the wealthy were furnished with seats of every description, ranging from the camp-stool up to the richly decorated "fauteuil." The simpler kinds were of plain, unadorned wood, the more costly of ebony inlaid with ivory. The great European museums contain a few examples of each, but the whole number is so small that, were it not for paintings and bas-reliefs in tombs and temples, our ideas of Egyptian furniture would be very incomplete.

Wise use of material.

Scantily as it is represented to us by extant examples, they are sufficient to show that one of its distinguishing characteristics was a wise use of material. This alone would entitle it to special consideration in an age like ours, when mechanical appliances enable us to bend wood to our will without regarding the all-important point, as to whether that will is not so directly in opposition to its nature as to insure the speedy destruction of the object fashioned out of it. No one can study such an Egyptian chair as this from the British Museum (Fig. 3) without being convinced that the workman who made it not only knew the peculiar properties of wood, but that he respected them, and thus constructed an object which, unless accidentally destroyed, would last for ages without splitting or falling to pieces. Knowing that wood would warp in drying, that dampness would affect it, and that its tendencies were to split and twist, he treated it so as to render its natural defects as harmless as possible. Instead of mak-

Fig. 3.



ing his chair out of green wood forcibly bent into abnormal curves, or artificially combining as many units as possible in it, he took the wood as Nature had made it, seasoned it thoroughly, and used as few pieces as possible. Simple in shape, construction, and decoration, it was, when finished, durable and useful, as well as pleasing in effect.

Correct decorative principles.

In decorating furniture the Egyptian cabinet-maker never veiled construction, but obeyed the sound precept that decoration should spring from construction, and not construction from decoration. With flat inlays which produced no unevennesses of surface, a slanting back slightly curved to fit the spine and give it an agreeable support, his chair was comfortable and convenient. Our illustrations will enable the reader to judge of the truth of the above remarks. Fig. 4 is a camp-stool; Fig. 5 the upper part of the same, showing the flexible seat. The crossed legs terminate in serpents' heads, inlaid with ivory. An air of firmness is imparted to the whole by the way in which the round sticks below are grasped in the jaws of the serpents. Fig. 6 is an inlaid seat from a wall painting, as is Fig. 7. The back of the latter terminates in a swan's head, and the legs in lion's paws, often so used in Egyptian furniture. In these painted representations the little round blocks upon which real examples are always raised have been left out. We see them in Fig. 8,—a bench with a straight back adorned with regularly disposed ivory inlays. These blocks carry out the structural element of the object, which would be otherwise obscured by the lion's legs and feet, and serve also to raise the latter above the carpet or matting upon

Fig. 4.

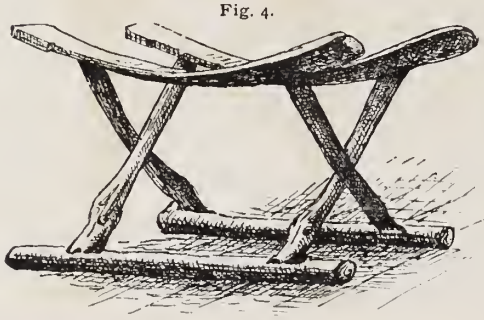
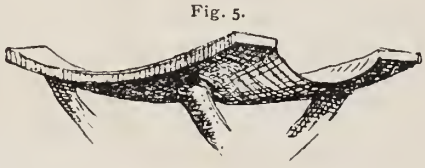


Fig. 5.



Why chairs were raised upon round blocks.

the floor, so that they may not be concealed and lost in it. Decorative details. We find here a just recognition of the nature of furniture,

Fig. 7.

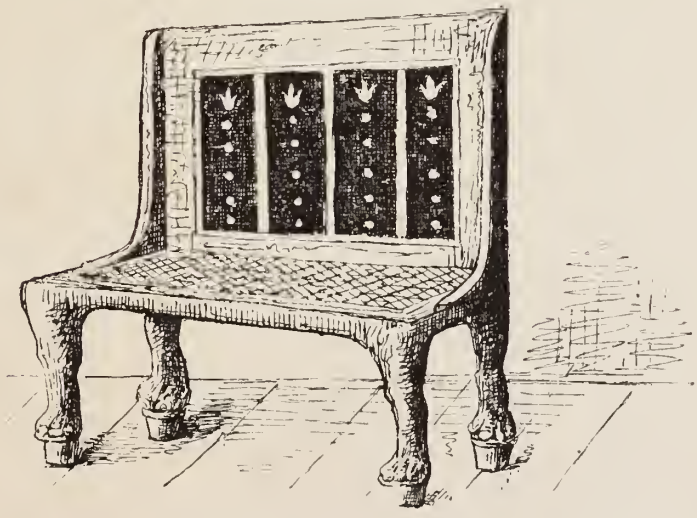


Fig. 6.



which is movable and should appear so. Lions' heads were often used as decorative terminations to the arms of chairs,

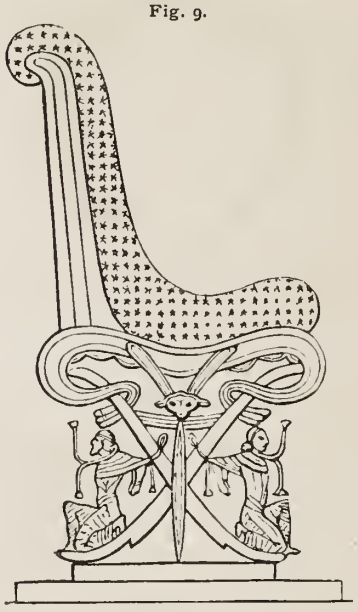
Fig. 8.



and these sometimes represented the whole body of the animal. The wooden or cane chair-bottom was covered with a

cushion of colored cotton, painted leather, or gold and silver tissue, whose bright colors contrasted admirably with the black ebony framework and its delicate ivory inlays. Generally speaking, the cushions placed upon seats were movable, as in mediæval furniture, but that they were at times attached to the framework — upholstered, as we should say — is seen by the painted "fauteuils" from the tomb of Rameses III. at Biban el Molouk, one of which is given in Fig. 9. This elaborate piece of furniture is supported upon the heads of prisoners kneeling with their hands tied behind their backs, as they are represented in sculptures of the same period at Karnac. The persistence of this very appropriate form of symbolism is shown in such a Cathedra, or Bishop's Throne, as that in the Cathedral at Troja, a work of the eleventh century. It is indeed hard to say what form or decoration cannot be thus traced back to Egypt, that cradle of all human inventions.

Fig. 9.



Mural decorations.

To complete our picture of the Egyptian house, we must speak of its mural decorations, which added so much to the gay and beautiful effect both of its interior and exterior. Architecture in Egypt was always polychromatic. Columns and their capitals, cornices, friezes, door and window frames, blazed with color, making the palaces, temples, and tombs upon the Nile banks appear like so many architectural flowers, repeating, and harmonizing with, the hues of the natural objects around them. The need of color in man's work is a response to the abundant display of it in God's work. There are indeed but few colorless objects in nature, and even these are for the most part transparent bodies, such as air and water, which refract and transmit light, receiving and giving back

Color universally used by the ancients.

the most beautiful hues and gradations of tone. This is one of the strong arguments in favor of the universal use of color by the ancients upon buildings, bas-reliefs, mouldings, and even statues, which was especially justified in Oriental countries, as well as in Greece and Asia Minor, where the cold tones of white marble were too much opposed to the glowing fervor of skies and waters to be tolerated. Thus thought the Egyptians, who used color so universally, not only through pigments, but through slabs of colored marble and granite, as well as mosaic and painted stucco. Several of the pyramids at Saqquarah show remains of the slabs which once completely concealed their surfaces. Built of syenite and rose-colored granite, they were polished and carved with hieroglyphics filled in with opaque, colored enamel, which contrasted with the smooth and glistening surfaces around them. A like incrustation was also practised in Chaldæa and Babylonia. The walls of temples at Wurka in Chaldæa still retain a coating of stucco in some cases two and a half inches deep, while those of Babylon were covered with enamelled bricks forming pictures of royal hunting-parties such as are represented in Assyrian bas-reliefs. Even in Greece the practice of incrusting buildings was not uncommon, although it was principally confined to those constructed of rough and porous stone. The Greek temples at Pæstum, for instance, were covered with stucco, which was so painted as to emphasize the triglyphs, friezes, and other architectural members.

Surfaces of buildings incrusted.

If from architecture we turn to sculpture, we find wooden statues at Boulaq older than the pyramids, which were formerly covered with a light covering of stucco painted after life, and the inner chambers of tombs at Saqquarah, whose sculptured walls are covered in the same manner. It is not necessary to multiply examples of incrustation, but we may note that chryselephantine sculpture, one of the grandest branches of Greek art, which culminated in the splendid statues of Minerva and Jupiter by Phidias, was but a series of incrustations upon a kernel of wood. Semper, who traces back all arts to the textile, says that the incrusting principle

Sculptural incrustation.

Origin of mural decorations.

is but the principle of clothing applied to buildings and statues. He finds a like origin for mural decoration in the Eastern habit of decorating walls with hangings and embroidered carpets. Textiles were, he says, the first materials used for enclosing space. This is indicated by the fact that in German the word "wand," wall, has the same root as "gewand," garment. Such philological deductions are not, it is true, always safe, nor do we need them in this case, as we find enough in the character of many wall-paintings in Egyptian tombs to prove that the tabernacle or tent, with its woven hangings and festoons of flowers, was the suggestive source of more solid decorations. Single pictures are surrounded with borders as if hung on the walls, and not, as later, identified with them; and the patterns of early ornament used to decorate ceilings are manifestly derived from weaving and embroidery. In the mural paintings of Egypt, as in those of Pompeii, the darker colors are generally used at the base. The dados are painted black, and decorated with lotus and papyrus flowers. In the temple at Deir el Bahari (Thebes) the portion of the wall above the dado has a dark background, but this is exceptional, the backgrounds being generally light in tone.

Varying system of mural decoration.

As we have no existing examples of private houses in Egypt, we can only argue as to the system of decoration used in them from that applied to palaces and temples. This system varied at different periods. During the Old Empire color played a secondary part, and painting had not the decorative character which it later assumed. In temples and tombs the subjects chosen for representation show us the usual occupations of life, — tilling the fields, hunting, fishing, boating, etc., etc. The government was then of a patriarchal character, whereas later it became sacerdotal and autocratic. This shows itself in art, by a gradual increase of religious emblems, figures of divinities, and priestly ceremonies during the Middle Empire, and most markedly in the paintings of the New Empire, which illustrate military operations of the Pharaohs, and tend exclusively to the exaltation of the reigning



monarch by the commemoration of his conquests. That something of a parallel kind showed itself in the decoration of private houses is possible. The elements of ornament were undoubtedly the same in private as in public buildings. These are the lotus and papyrus flowers, the palm branch, and the feathers of birds, as well as a number of geometrical patterns derived from the primitive arts of weaving and plaiting. Whether constructive, representative, or decorative, ornament was thus composed of plant forms treated conventionally, or of purely geometrical patterns. The treatment of the first was regulated by the laws of natural growth, namely, radiation from a central stem, proportionate distribution and balance of parts, a corresponding harmony in curves, repetition and alternation of units. The simple or complex treatment of lotus and papyrus flowers, buds, leaves, and stems, according to these principles, and the use of brilliant flat tints juxtaposed harmoniously, made the Egyptian system of mural decoration rich, varied, and glowing, as well as thoroughly in harmony with the scale of color set by nature in the Nile valley. The colors, mixed in water without gum, used by the early Egyptian artists, were white and black, the three primaries, red, blue, and yellow, and the secondary, green. Other secondaries, purple and orange, were admitted during the New Empire, when the scale of color, which under less glowing skies would have been out of keeping, became as brilliant as a macaw's wing.

Elements of ornament.

Colors used.

Nor was it unsuited to a system of architecture distinguished for massiveness of construction and simplicity of line; for, being as it were a synthesis between nature and art, it brought these into harmony with each other, and, like jewels hung about the person of some stately beauty of regular features and dignified presence, set off by contrast the prevailing severity of form.

Probably no scene that the eye of man ever rested on was more splendid than a banquet in the palace of some great dignitary at Thebes or Memphis (see Plate I.). The guest, alighting at the door of an Egyptian Lucullus, as repre-

An Egyptian banquet.

sented in a wall-painting at Thebes, was received by slaves, who washed his hands and feet with perfumed water out of a basin of gold. Thus refreshed, he entered the reception-room, where certain ceremonies preliminary to the banquet were performed. (Fig. 10.) The head of every guest was

Fig. 10.



anointed with a sweet-scented ointment, in sign of welcome, a lotus-flower was then given to him to hold in his hand, a chaplet of the same flowers was hung about his neck, and a

Fig. 11.



crown of them placed on his head, so arranged that one bud or flower should fall upon his forehead.[1] The company was then admitted to the banqueting-hall, the effect of whose

[1] Semper, *Der Stil.*, Vol. I. p. 15, note.

highly colored walls, deep blue ceiling spangled with golden stars, and columns with their ribbed shafts of papyrus and lotus stems surmounted by capitals of lotus-flowers colored like nature, was heightened by the costly garments of the guests, seated around the heavily laden tables,[1] and by the towering head-dresses of the women, made up of plumes and jewels and bands of gold and colored stuffs, combined with a skill which even that of a Parisian Figaro would be taxed in vain to imitate.[2] Behind every guest stood a slave; in the background the musicians and troops of dancers, whose languid and voluptuous movements tempted eyes to wander from the feast. Suddenly in the midst of feasting and revelry, when every sense was stimulated, and all remembrance of the fleeting nature of earthly pleasures was lost, a slave appeared at the reveller's side carrying a small figure of a mummy lying on a bier, and, showing it to him, uttered these words: "Gaze here, drink and be merry; for when you die, such will you be."

Assyrian discoveries.

While it is comparatively easy to rehabilitate the past in Egypt, owing to the astonishing state of preservation of her monuments, it is far less so in Assyria, though the discoveries of Layard, Botta, and Smith have, within the last thirty or forty years, thrown much light upon her manners and customs. The information which they have given us was not, however, obtained, like that of Champollion, Mariette, and other Egyptian explorers, from pyramids and tombs and palaces still standing in almost undiminished perfection, but from remains of buildings lying buried under heaps of *débris*, whose original condition is still to some extent a matter of conjecture. Like the other inhabitants of the Mesopotamian valley, the Assyrians built their cities, palaces, and temples on the tops of huge artificial mounds, many hundreds of which still exist. Nineveh, for example, was entirely constructed on

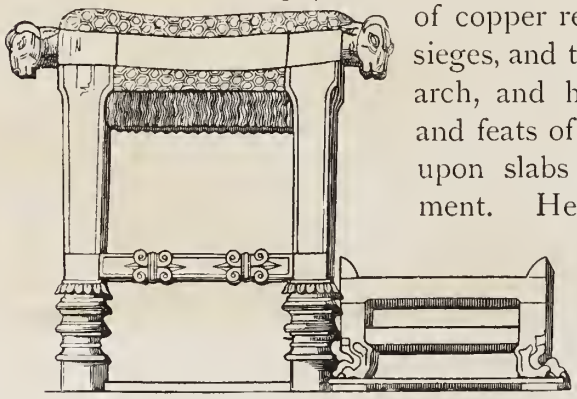
[1] Unlike the Greeks and Romans, the Egyptians sat at table.

[2] These head-dresses were especially elaborate in the reign of Rameses Meiamoun, XIXth Dynasty. See the portrait of his daughter, Queen Nebté, given by M. Prisse d'Avennes.

Sculptured decorations.

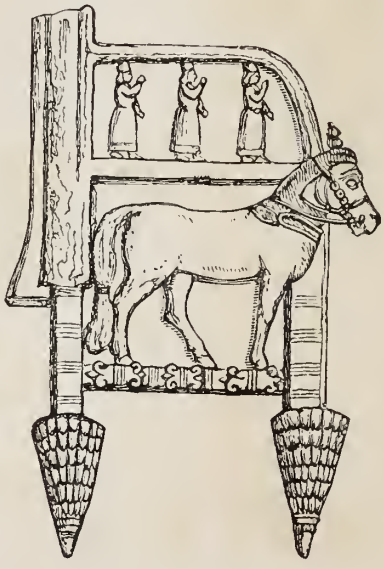
monuments, whose walls were covered with reliefs relating to the lives of their founders, sculptured upon slabs of gray alabaster disposed in one or two rows, above which enamelled bricks filled up the space between them and the cornice. Inscriptions engraved upon plates of copper recounted the battles, sieges, and triumphs of the monarch, and his titles, genealogy, and feats of arms were recorded upon slabs set into the pavement. He himself was represented of colossal size in a huge bas-relief at the upper end of the great hall, attended by warriors, and in the act of adoring the supreme deity. Splendid in appearance as such halls must have been, they cannot have rivalled those of Egypt in effect, both because of their far less stately proportions, and of their lower scale of color. Instead of the most vivid hues placed in direct contrast with each other, pale blues, greens, and yellows were brought into juxtaposition, as well as red, orange, brown, white, and black. Their ornamental types were taken from the vegetable kingdom, the most common being the poppy, the lotus, and the pine-cone, treated with proper regard to the laws of growth in nature, but less strictly than by the Egyptians.

Fig. 14.

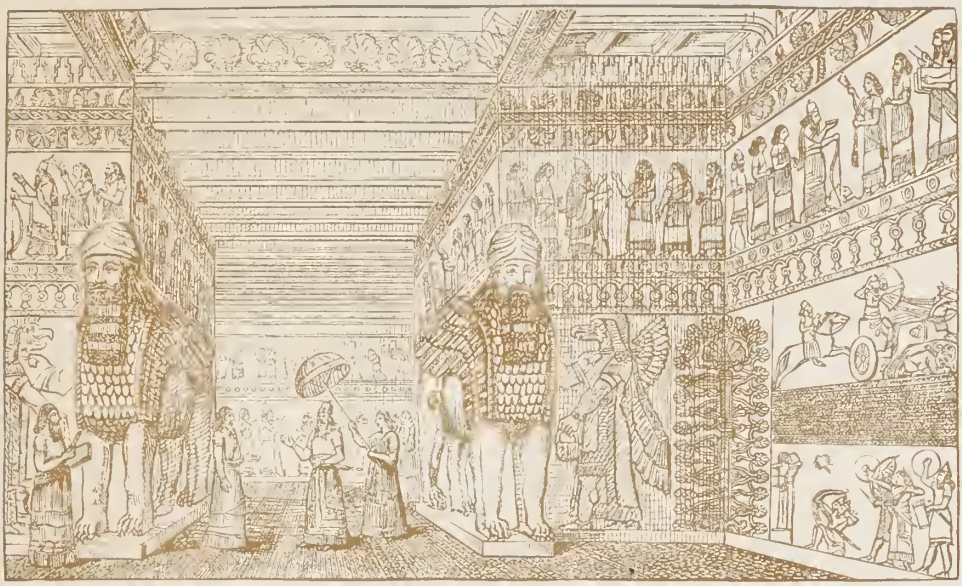


Low scale of color.

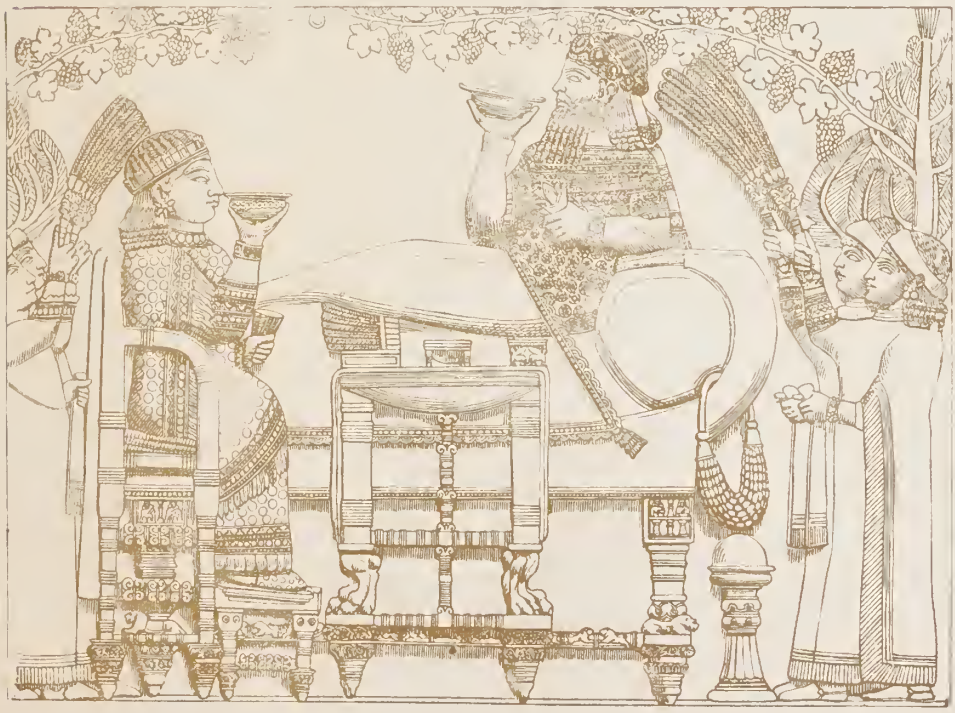
Fig. 15.



The description which Josephus gives of the palace of Solomon at Jerusalem, built by Phœnician workmen, tallies very closely with what we know of



A. INTERIOR OF AN ASSYRIAN PALACE.
(After Layard.)



B. ASSYRIAN COUCH, CHAIR, Etc.
(From Koyunjik.)

conjectures,[1] as the horses are in the accompanying illustration (Fig. 15) from a chair represented on a bas-relief at Khorsabad. Little is known, however, about Hebrew furniture, and of Assyrian less than of Egyptian, which it resembled in constructive and decorative materials, though it was heavier, less well proportioned, and more rigid and unelastic in form. Chairs, tables, beds (Figs. 13 – 16), etc., were made of wood, plain, or adorned with inlays of ivory, metal, amber, tortoise-shell, mother-of-pearl, or some other costly material; and also of wood covered with metal plates, or wholly of cast metal. As in Egyptian examples, the movable character of articles of furniture was clearly indicated by the pointed feet upon which they rested. (Plate II., B.) These were either ribbed, or shaped like that sacred emblem, the pine-cone, or like the feet of bulls and lions. Sometimes the supporting parts of thrones, altars, and tables were fashioned like the trunk of the sacred tree, the special emblem of Asshur, the Assyrian Jupiter,[2] which figures so largely in Assyrian bas-reliefs. Where figures of animals were introduced as ornaments upon furniture, either in relief or in the round, the decorator, like the sculptor, showed himself a close student of nature; but in dealing with the human form, both failed. They represented wild animals with astonishing life and energy, making them sometimes terrible through realism; but their human figures are clumsy, thick-set, and formal in character. Bronze casting, embossed work hammered out and finished with the graver, open-work in metal plates, made to be fastened with nails upon flat surfaces, and the carving of small panels or tablets of ivory, to be mortised or glued to the same, were technical processes which they thoroughly understood, and by which they decorated furniture of all sorts.

Assyrian furniture.

Characteristic details of form and ornament.

In concluding what we have said about Egyptian and

fell into idolatry during their wanderings in the desert, wished to worship the one God."

[1] *Ancient and Modern Furniture in the South Kensington Museum*, Introduction, p. ix.

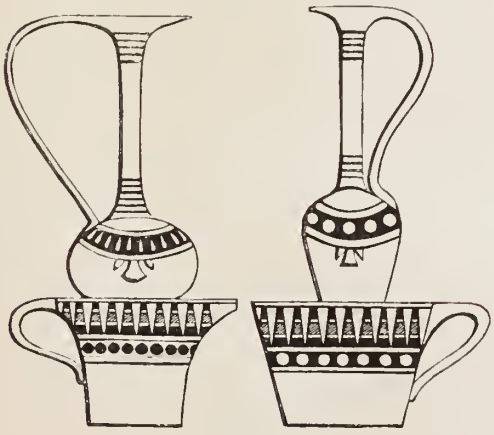
[2] As an emblem it recalls the tree of life in Genesis, the sacred tree of the Hindoos, and the Zoroastrian Homa, which was preserved by the Persians in almost identical shape, until the Arab invasion. — LAYARD, Vol. II. p. 472, note.

Assyrian furniture, we are tempted again to insist upon the excellent points which we find in both. These are a use of material in consonance with its nature; an application of decorative forms to construction, so calculated as to relieve and heighten characteristic beauties without concealing structure; and a distinct expression of the movable nature of furniture as therein differing from any monumental or architectural constructions. Special points of excellence.

We cannot bring this Introduction to a close without heartily commending Dr. Falke's "Art in the House" to the American public. For clearness of plan and soundness of criticism, and for the lucid setting forth of the excellences and defects of ancient and modern systems of house building and decoration in an interesting and impressive manner, it has perhaps no rival among books of its kind.

As such, we feel it an honor to have aided in presenting it in its English dress to those who aim at making their homes beautiful, comfortable, and ornamental.

THE EDITOR



PREFACE.



EFERRING the reader to the Introduction, the author has but a few remarks to make by way of preface to the following work. The first is, that, like his "History of Modern Taste," it consists of lectures, which, with the exception of the last, were delivered almost as they stand, at the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry. This circumstance, which must be taken into consideration, has not been without a certain influence upon the book. It were useless to deny—what these pages often betray—that they were written for a special purpose. They are not simply historical sketches, nor do they aim only at explaining and working out ideas in the abstract. They have a practical object. This is to show how beauty and æsthetic charm can be given to the house, and how, through the medium of artistic harmony, a feeling of comfort, peace, and pleasure may be generated within its four walls. This book is therefore addressed, not only to the artist and the decorator, or to whoever else it may practically concern, but more especially to those who have to select and to direct, with the object of adorning their dwellings artistically, and in good taste. To such it may be in some sort an æsthetic home manual, adviser, and assistant.

What this work consists of.

Practical object of the author.

That this end has not been wholly unfulfilled is proved by the rapidity with which a second and a third edition have been called for. With the exception of the Dedication, the

three are almost identical in form and substance. The first edition was honored by the name of a sovereign, who, amid the pomp of royalty and the splendor of a throne, had succeeded in making a truly artistic and poetic home for himself in his beloved Ulriksdal, than which none could be more in harmony with the spirit of this book. Since then, Charles XV. of Sweden has died in the prime of manhood, deeply mourned by all who, having had the happiness to approach him closely, had learned to appreciate and admire in him the rare union of distinguished talent, a most winning and noble disposition, and a culture at once deep and broad, with a singular freedom from prejudice, and great independence of thought. May this third edition serve to keep his memory alive.

Dedication to Charles XV., King of Sweden.



INTRODUCTION.



IN BUT too many cases the adornment of the dwelling is regarded as of secondary importance even by those who are not exclusively devoted to the material side of life, and who in other intellectual matters fully appreciate the advantages of modern culture. It also happens that, for want of individual knowledge, even those who mean well commit the arrangement and adornment of their dwellings, for better or worse, to the tradesman, with the feeling that he will best understand what ought to be done. And yet, even under the most favorable circumstances, he does and can do little else than follow the dictates of fashion. We regret this state of things the more when we consider what an important part house and home play in our lives; how much their beauty can add to the pleasures of existence; and how the mere helping to produce such beauty is in itself a source of positive delight, since even if we are only called upon to exercise judgment in selecting materials, we are doing artists' work, which brings with it a real enjoyment. Ought we not to strive all the more to adorn this microcosm in which we live, because it is usually the only little world in which we are really lord and master, although, alas! but too often with strictly constitutional limitations? Should we not deem it worth while so to decorate, arrange, and furnish it that it may harmonize perfectly with our own needs and feelings; that like a more ample gar-

Frequent indifference to æsthetic requirements.

Why this is to be regretted.

ment its æsthetic character may fit our spirit and being, as our clothes do the body?

Want of knowledge.

The present uncertainty of judgment in the wide field of taste makes this a hard thing to do. If, on the one hand, a really assured and cultivated taste — that is, the ability to distinguish the truly good and beautiful from the ugly and objectionable — is precisely the thing only too generally wanting, on the other, the materials for domestic furnishing and decoration which are offered to our choice are in most cases unsatisfactory and distasteful. The intelligent judgment must turn away in despair from many places because it fails to find what it seeks. These are evils which the explanations given and discussions carried on in this work may help to remove. If we would substitute a clear and critical comprehension for a vague feeling, and timid, hesitating choice, we must be able to answer the inquiries which the need of an æsthetic element in our houses puts to us daily; we must acquaint ourselves thoroughly with the matter, and, through knowledge of it, awaken an ever-increasing interest in it. To this end there are two roads. One may make one's self intimately acquainted with a given subject by following up its history, and thus ascertain how present conditions were induced; or one may examine existing conditions in surrounding objects, and apply to them those various methods of criticism which will tell us what is right and what is wrong, what may be allowed and what must be rejected. In the following pages both methods have been tried, — first the historical, and then the critical, — with the belief that perfect mastery of a subject can only be acquired by combining the two.

The two ways to acquire it.

Summary of contents.

The first four sections are devoted to an historical review. This is little enough, considering the richness and scope of the subject. The aim of this essay being practical, it did not seem necessary to extend our researches into the remotest times. Epochs when art was in its perfection and flower being of more vital importance to the present time, as material for study and imitation, seem to us more significant and interesting than first attempts and imperfect stages of develop-

ment. We shall, therefore, begin our first section with a sketch of the Greco-Roman house.

The five ensuing sections, which form the second or critical portion of our essay, treat of the universal conditions and essential parts of the house, namely, the floor, the walls, and the ceiling, as also of furniture and those household utensils which serve to decorate the table. This we consider to be the most important portion of the work. The tenth chapter seems to have a less close connection with the rest, and was, in fact, delivered as an independent lecture in a different place; but, treating as it does of woman's responsibility in the adornment of the house, as well as of that peculiarly domestic art, embroidery, with especial reference to decoration, it forms a legitimate part of the contents. It is an important supplement to the rest, and has been introduced here as a suitable conclusion.

Connection of the last chapter with the subject treated.



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ART IN THE HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

THE GRECO-ROMAN HOUSE.



OMITTING any consideration of those beginnings and attempts at artistic arrangement and decoration of the house which have no immediate bearing upon the present time, we shall begin our historical survey with a description of the Greco-Roman house.

The house considered only as a dwelling-place.

At the outset we have two observations to make. The first of these is, that we intend to consider the house neither constructively nor architecturally, but as a dwelling-place, that is to say, in all that relates to its internal adornment and arrangement. As, however, the decoration and fitting up of the rooms are often essentially dependent upon the construction of the house and upon its divisions, and were more especially so in the antique dwelling, these latter points must not remain altogether unconsidered.

Our second observation is, that in speaking of the Greco-Roman house we do not intend to imply that Greek and Roman houses were absolutely identical, for it is well known that they differed in arrangement.[1] On the other hand, it is

[1] The reader who is curious about this matter will find it fully discussed in Hermann's edition of Becker's *Charikles* and in the same author's *Gallus* edited by

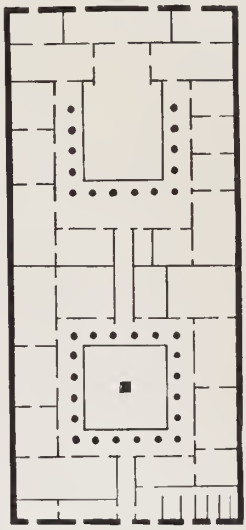
CHAP. I.

General conformity of plan.

certain that they were alike in the characteristic peculiarities of their ground-plans; and, as to decoration, from the time

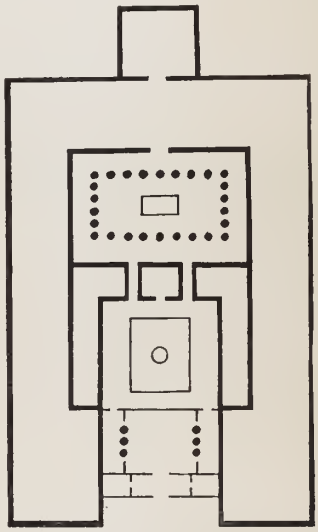
Dr. Rein. The Greek (Fig. 17), like the Roman house (Fig. 18), was divided into men's quarters and women's quarters, but in the first the division was made in order to separate the sexes, while in the second the object was to separate the family from the outer world. The Greek gynæconitis,

Fig. 17.



in which the women dwelt, was jealously guarded by slaves, like the Turkish harem. The house was built like a modern Oriental dwelling, with several courts leading into one another. If there were but two such courts, the inner one was appropriated to the women and children, and no man but the master of the house was permitted to enter it. The Roman house resembled a modern palace in the appropriation of the rooms, for while some of them were devoted to family life, others to society, and others to business, the whole was practically open to persons of both sexes and all conditions. In the poems of Homer, the women live in the second story (ὑπερῷον· διῆρες), but in historic times they occupied the half of the ground-floor at the back of the house. The distribution of the rooms, both in the Greek and in the Roman house, was from a very remote period analogous to that of the Pompeian. The outlines of atria and peristyles, as also of conduits for carrying off rain-water, and cisterns,

Fig. 18.



were traced by Dyer (*Ancient Athens*, 1873) in the foundations of houses scattered about the Museion, the Pnyx, the Nymphs' Hill, and the Areopagus at Athens, together with those of burial-places. This latter point indicates a great antiquity, as from a very remote period sepulture was not permitted within the walls of houses. The oldest of these Athenian dwellings were mere hovels, like the straw-thatched cabins of the early Romans. From these to the splendid abodes of later times there was a wide step, which the Greeks did not take until after the Peloponnesian war (B. C. 431), and the Romans not until they had subdued Greece and the provinces of Asia Minor. Until then, while wealth was lavished upon

when Art took up her abode in Italy and made Rome her capital, it was one and the same for the Greek and the Roman house.

It is not, however, on this account only that the following essay treats principally, and indeed exclusively, of the house during the Empire, and is silent about the Greek house in the days of Pericles, or the Roman house in republican times. At these periods, when political life was in a condition of rapid development or had culminated in the highest attainment, and art in Athens was at its apogee, its influence upon the decoration of private dwellings was by no means so great as it afterwards became. The state was still regarded from the antique point of view as the first object of consideration, in presence of which individual interests were of no importance. It was not within his own four walls that the citizen of the old republics felt himself most at home. He found the field of his activity and the centre of his thoughts in popular assemblies, public squares, gymnasia, and halls of justice. It followed, therefore, that art was permitted to spend its strength only in the service of the state through the adornment of temples and other public buildings. For a long time, indeed, the Athenians were forbidden to adorn their houses and dwellings conspicuously.

The state of paramount importance.

But this could not last when private fortunes increased, and it became customary to receive great numbers of friends and to give great banquets, — when art was popularized, when the love of art spread, and the rich man became a Mæcenas. In Athens, Alcibiades was the first to have his house painted

Increasing splendor of private buildings.

great public buildings, private houses were plain and simple. Thucydides tells us (II. 14, 65) that all foreigners who visited Athens in the time of Pericles were struck with the great contrast between the splendor of the first and the plainness of the last. In his oration against Aristarchus, Demosthenes compares the simple dwellings of a Themistocles and a Miltiades with those of the rich Athenians of his own day, and is as explicit in his manner of pointing out the increase of luxury in Greece after the time of Alexander, as Filippo Villani is in his *Chronicles*, when commenting upon a like departure from ancient simplicity in houses and dress which distinguished the Florentines of the early part of the fourteenth century from their ancestors, who had willingly submitted to sumptuary laws of a very stringent character.

CHAP. I.

artistically;[2] whilst at Rome great sums of money were first spent in building and decorating private houses towards the end of the Republic, in the days of Sulla and Lucullus. In this respect extravagance was carried to a great pitch within a few years; as, for example, by Marcus Scaurus (the prætor), who imported for his new house monoliths of black marble thirty-eight feet in length, and of such great weight that the overseer of sewers was obliged to take special precautions to save these subterranean canals from the risk of being broken in upon during their transport across the city.[3] At this same period Domitius Ahenobarbus offered Crassus 500,000 gulden (about $ 200,000) for his house, but the sum was refused as too small. While the simplicity of private dwellings during the earlier epochs is of itself a reason for directing our attention to those of a later time, we can do so to great advantage, thanks to a most singular circumstance. The sources of our information about the older times are few and altogether of a written character; but, owing to a wonderful event, we have the most ample information about the first century of the Empire, when decorative art was fully and even a little over developed, without having yet fallen, at least technically, into the absolutely corrupt state which characterized it

Chief sources of information.

[2] Plutarch (*Alcib.*, 16) says that Alcibiades kept the painter Agatharchus a prisoner in his house until he had decorated it with paintings, and then dismissed him with a fitting recompense. It is uncertain (Becker, Vol. II. p. 107) whether these paintings, and those with which Zeuxis adorned the palace of Archelaus, King of Macedonia, about the same time, were executed upon the walls, or upon panels afterwards attached to them, but Helbig (*Untersuchungen*, p. 125) thinks that they were mural, as the costly easel picture formed no part of the decoration of a private house before the time of the Diadochoi. The first painted ceilings are attributed by Pliny (*H. N.*, XXXV. 40) to Pausias of Sicyon (B. C. 350), but this must be an error, as in the *Wasps of Aristophanes* (B. C. 422) the guest at a private house is enjoined to praise the tasteful decoration of the ceilings and the beauty of the curtains suspended between the columns: —

Ὀροφὴν θέασαι, Κρεκᾶδι αὐλῆς θαυμάσον.

[3] Marcus Scaurus, the eldest son of a Roman patrician of the same name, and step-son of Sulla, the dictator, flourished from B. C. 64 to 52. The columns referred to in the text were of Lucullean marble, and were quarried in the island of Chios. (Plin., *H. N.*, Lib. XXXVI. Ch. II. 36.) *Le Palais de Scaurus*, by Ch. Mazois, may be recommended as a book which gives a faithful picture of a first-class Roman house during the Empire.

in the Decadence. We refer to the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum by the eruption of Vesuvius, A. D. 79. Their partial resurrection, through the excavations begun in the middle of the last century, has not only filled our museums with countless pictures, but has made us perfectly at home in the antique household.

The exact knowledge thus obtained shows us how absolutely it differed from that of to-day, and how completely its whole plan, furnishing, and decoration depended upon the manner of life of the ancients. Although the social position of the Roman wife was very much higher than that of the Greek, it was not by any means so high as that which belongs to woman in modern civilization. The man alone belonged to public life, to the world; the woman to the household, to the family; her highest functions were the bringing up of her children and the management of her household.[4] Hence

Social status of women.

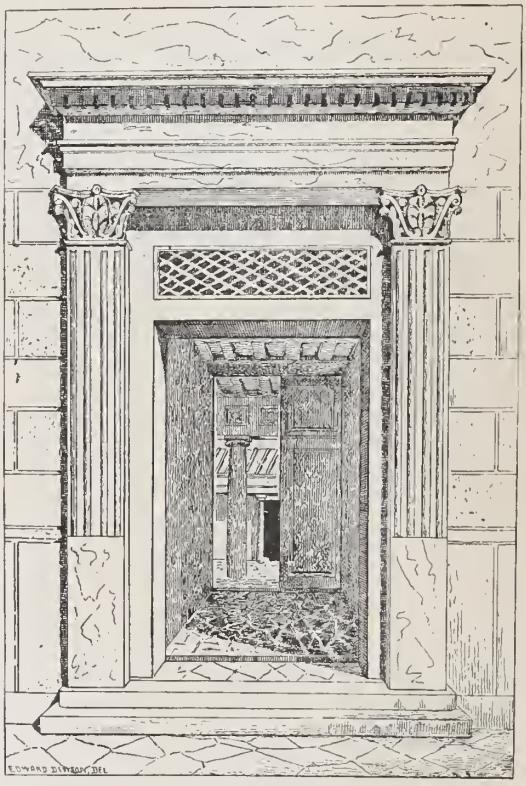
[4] In the simpler state of society which existed in the Homeric period, the Greek woman held a higher place in the household than she did in the fifth century B. C., when she was regarded as a creature inferior to man both in mind and heart, unfit for public life, evil-disposed, created only to be a mother or a mistress. The words which Euripides puts into the mouth of Iphigenia (*Iph. in Aulis*, l. 1380), Εἷς γ' ἀνὴρ κρείσσων γυναικῶν μυριῶν ὁρᾶν φάος (*a single man is more worthy to see the light than a thousand women*), are indicative of the Greek feeling about them in his day. Exceptions were made in recognition of exceptional virtues which brought about peculiar relations between women and their husbands or the state, but such isolated cases did not avail to raise the sex to that higher place which belonged to it in the Roman state and household. There the wife was reverenced as the "materfamilias," and the guardian of the honor of the house. The husband was indeed an absolute master, "qui tenebat non mode auctoritatem, sed etiam imperium in suos" (*Cicero de Sen.* II.), but he treated his female companion as his equal, and allowed her a considerable degree of liberty. No law regulated her outgoings and incomings. She was allowed to plead or witness in a court of justice, to share in certain religious ceremonies, and although she took no ostensible part in public affairs, this was in deference to custom, as also to the natural limitations and innate modesty of her sex. (See Becker's *Charikles* and *Gallus*, and *La Cité Antique*, par M. Fustel de Coulanges, on this point.) M. Gaston Boissier in his *Religion Romaine*, Vol. II. Ch. II., says: "In the public schools, which were frequented by plebeian children, boys and girls were taught together, and in rich houses both sons and daughters studied the same books under lettered slaves, listened to the grammarians who commented upon the great poets of Greece and Rome, and imbibed a taste for Menander and Terence, which they generally kept during their whole lives."

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both the Greek and Roman houses were regularly divided into two parts, the front one of which was devoted to intercourse with the world, the other to the wife, the family, and household affairs.

But this separation of the world from the family impressed itself upon the plan and construction of antique houses in still another manner, for while custom demanded that the woman and all the life dependent upon her should be shut off from the outer world, the husband also, when he returned from the turmoil of public business, wished to find himself in a little world of his own. The whole house, therefore, looked *inward*, turned its back on the street and looked, so to speak, with its window eyes upon itself.[5] Nowadays we cannot have sufficient communication with the outside world; we build as many and as large windows as possible upon the street, and it is dark in our courts,

Fig. 19.



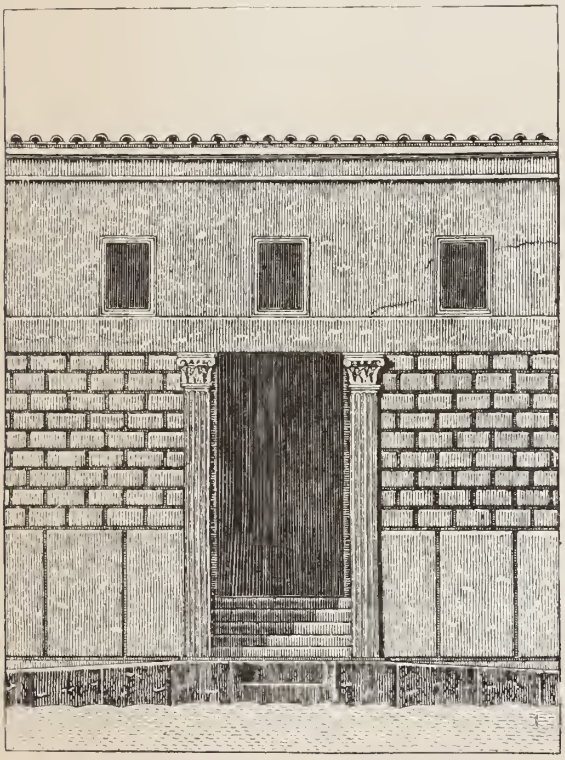
The house introspective.

5 Dr. Falke's words, "gazed with the eyes of all its windows upon itself," are not to be taken literally. The lower story, both of the Greek and the Roman house, was surrounded by shops and porticos, and therefore as a general rule had no windows; but this was not the case with the upper story. (See Fig. 20.) Livy (I. 41) speaks of Tanaquil as addressing the people from a window in the upper part of her house, and elsewhere (XXIV. 21) describes the excited multitude, some running through the streets, some standing in the porches of the houses and public buildings, and some looking on from the roofs and windows. See also

Ancient and modern systems contrasted.

which, on a *lucus a non lucendo* principle, we call "light-courts." The mediæval burgher, who was not obliged to keep within the prescribed building-line, and range his house-front in military order, liked to run it out into the street a few feet farther than that of his neighbor, in order to gain a side window from which he might comfortably enjoy the spectacle of life in the whole length of the thoroughfare. The Greek and Roman absolutely disdained this outward view upon the street and its bustling activities, which, though calculated to amuse and entertain the spectator, has something ignoble about it, quite out of harmony with the dignified repose of a house sufficient unto itself. On this account the aristocrats of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries built their palaces, their Faubourg St.-Germain, far from the haunts of business, in the most quiet quarters, and even there set them at some distance from the street, so that they might shut themselves out from it by a wall.

Fig. 20.



The Roman cared only to look out of the windows when at

the reference made to windows by Horace, Ode XXV. Lib. I.; by Juvenal, Sat. III, 270; and by Vitruvius, V. 6. In Greek houses, windows (*θυρίδες*) were not at all uncommon.

CHAP. I.

Country life.

his villa, which was situated in a pleasant country, where he could enjoy the view without being overlooked by his neighbor or disturbed by the gaze of profane eyes from the street. The ancient house opened upon the street only through shops which had no connection with its interior, and by a door which was generally shut; never, or very seldom, by windows. All the rooms were disposed about a court more or less covered and furnished as a living-room, from which they received their light.[6] In this connection we may call attention to what constitutes a further difference between the ancient and the modern house, namely, that, as a rule, the former had only a ground-floor.[7] The upper part of the building was added when the necessity of supplying more room made itself felt.[8] An upper story was not at all uncommon

Upper stories exceptional.

[6] Unlike the city houses, the suburban and country villas were abundantly lighted; "luminosa erant," says Vitruvius (VI. 6). They contained special apartments for winter and for summer. Our chief source of information about the arrangements of a country house is Pliny's letter to Gallus (Lib. II. 17), in which he describes his Laurentian villa. The minuteness of detail which he enters into shows how he loved it, and how grateful was its repose to his spirit. Living there, he realized the portrait drawn by Horace (Ode XI., "vitæ rusticæ laudes") of the happy man, who, far from the cares attendant upon city life, cultivates his paternal fields in peace. There is perhaps no description in any language more graphic than that of Pliny's sleeping-room. "To this chamber of night and sleep neither the voices of the slaves, nor the murmur of the sea, nor the glare of the lightning-flash or of the day, can penetrate, save when the windows are unbarred." This is almost as sleep-compelling as Spenser's famous lines about Morpheus in the cave: —

"And more to lull him in his slumber soft,
A trickling stream from high rock tumbling down,
And ever drizzling rain upon the loft,
Mixt with the murmuring wind, much like the sound
Of swarming bees, did cast him in a swoon.
No other noise, nor people's troublous cries
As still are wont to annoy the walléd town,
Might there be heard; but careless quiet lies
Wrapt in eternal silence, far from enemies."

Faery Queen, B. I. Ch. I. 41.

[7] Both in Greek and Roman houses the little rooms opening out of the cavædium were lighted only by the door. Apollodorus makes Medea open her door that she may see the dawn of day. (*Bibliotheca Arycum*, Lib. III. v. 821.) Larger rooms were sometimes lighted by openings in the roof. In Greek houses the προστάς, a sort of court which opened out of the αὐλή (the Greek atrium), where the family altar (βωμός) stood, was lighted by a circular opening in the roof (ὀπή). See Batissier, *Hist. de l'Art monumental*, p. 197.

[8] Sometimes the second story was inhabited by slaves, sometimes it was let to strangers, though generally they were lodged in outbuildings (*domusculæ*, *hospitalia*) connected with the main edifice by passages (μέσαυλοι). People of small means hired a cœnaculum, i. e. a chamber or small apartment in an upper story.

in walled towns, although in Pompeii it usually extended only over a part of the house, and on account of its irregularity did but little towards giving an effect of height to the exterior. In Rome, indeed, where, owing to the unmeasured increase of the population, the number of poor tenants greatly exceeded that of the householders, houses were built up into the air with story above story, until Augustus was obliged to limit their maximum height to seventy feet.[9] This result, which was consequent upon the colossal growth of the world's metropolis, does not, however, conflict with our general statement, especially as it had no influence upon the character of the decoration; for these lofty buildings were inhabited by the poorer classes, who had little or nothing to do with art. Were it otherwise, we should also have to consider that, owing to the varying irregularity of the site, the manner of grouping the different chambers around the two successive courts was subject to innumerable exceptions, all of which, however, serve only to illustrate the force of custom, since they show that under all possible circumstances the architect remained as true to the ruling type as was practicable.

Plan of houses at Pompeii.

In Pompeian houses we pass, as a rule, from the vestibule through a corridor, between two rooms used as shops and opening on the street, which have no connection with the interior of the house.[10] From this corridor, which was generally closed, we step immediately into the first court or hall,

Martial lived up three pair of stairs, "scalis habito tribus, sed altis." (Lib. I. Epog. 117, l. 7.) A visitor to a sick friend living with many other persons in one of the lodging-houses (*insulæ*) would speak with the janitor, who would tell him to mount to the second floor and knock to the right, as a French *concierge* would say, "Au deuxième, frappez à droite." (Rein and Becker, p. 17.) Houses of two stories were built at Rome after the consulate of M. Valerius and Spurius Virginius. At the time of the war with Pyrrhus they were built of sun-dried bricks, and had shingled roofs. (Plin., Lib. XVI. CXV.)

[9] This law, having become a dead letter, was revived by Trajan, who fixed the possible height of houses at sixty Roman feet (equal to about as many English feet). Such houses may have had five or even six stories.

[10] In a small provincial town like Pompeii the houses were generally on a smaller scale than those at the capital; and as many essential parts of a first-class Roman residence were not needed in a Pompeian abode, the ground-plan was varied accordingly. It was always, however, of an old Roman type, having the tablinum and the fauces, which are unknown to the

CHAP. I.

called the atrium, which, with the exception of the side occupied by the shops, was surrounded by rooms opening into it and receiving their light from it.

The old Roman house.

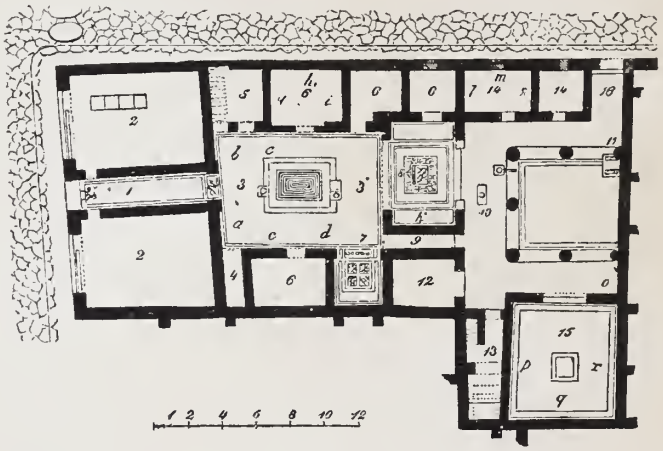
In primitive times the atrium was the most important part of the Roman house. It was the place where the family assembled, where the master of the house resided, where the mistress ruled and worked with her servants. Here were the penates and the family-hearth, near which all meals were taken.[11] In short, it was the seat and centre of all household and family life. Such being its uses, the atrium was rather a room than an open court, a hall which received all its light from an opening in the roof just large enough for this purpose, and for the escape of smoke.[12] But gradually, when the

---

Greek (Becker, II. 174), and the passage-way (*prothyrum*), spoken of in the text as leading from the street between the rooms used as shops. In the house of the tragic poet at Pompeii (see ground-plan, Fig. 21) the shops have doors opening into the side rooms just beyond the vestibule, — an exception to the statement made in the text, that they only could be entered from the street.

[11] "Illic et epulabantur et deos colebant." The penates were kept in small

Fig. 21.



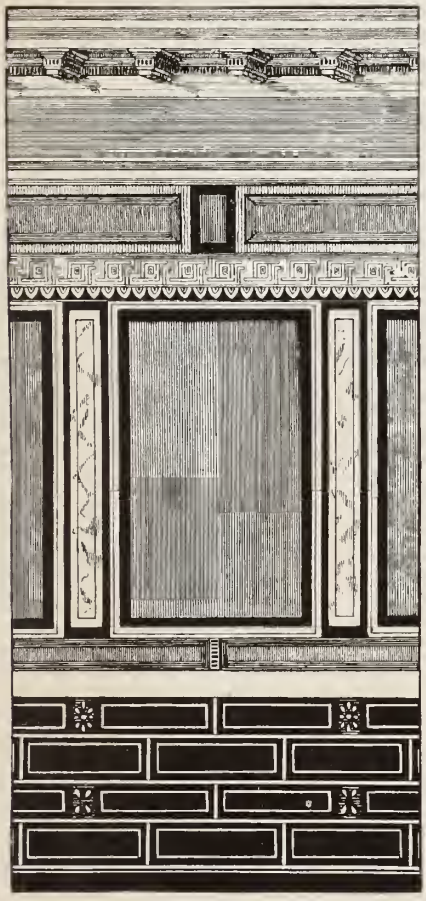
wooden cupboards (*ædicula*) or presses placed around the room. These presses were also called "penetralia," and the hearth "foci penetrales" (Virg., *Æn.*, V. 660). The symbolic bridal-bed, *thalamus nuptialis*, or *lectus genialis*, or *lectus adversus*, because it was placed opposite the door, stood in the atrium, as did the chest in which money was kept. There were the ancestral images, only allowed to those to whom the "jus imaginum" had been conceded, and there also the bodies of the dead were laid out.

[12] The identity of the atrium and the

Roman manner of living became more grandiose, when, instead of a few friends, troops of clients daily waited on their patron, and paced up and down the atrium until he appeared, that he might accord a greeting to each, or listen to their petitions, it was modified and enlarged to meet the requirements of this new state of things. The hearth was removed to another part of the house, which was used as a kitchen, the penates were consigned to a room of their own, called the sacrarium, and the matron withdrew with her maid-servants to the rear of the house; although she was never, like her Greek sister, entirely excluded from the front and its life. The atrium now became a court-like space surrounded by a covered portico, with a roof resting upon columns and a skylight considerably enlarged, while a tank was constructed in the middle of the floor to catch the rain-water. All the most remarkable houses at Pompeii are laid out in this manner. (See Plate III.)

Its later amplifications.

Fig. 22.



The more the front part of the house was in a certain sense

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cavædium has been much discussed. At a Philological Congress held at Frankfort, this question was decided in the negative. (Becker, Vol. II. pp. 192, 212.) The argument advanced in Smith's *Dictionary of Antiquities*, that none of the Pompeian houses have both an atrium and a cavædium, offers an unsafe basis for argument about great Roman houses, which were built on a much grander scale. In course

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opened to the public, and wholly devoted to the dignity and the affairs of its master, the more it became necessary to enlarge the rear, in order that it might accommodate his family and his more intimate circle of friends. In it were situated the dining-rooms, the living and sleeping rooms, and the reception-rooms, all of which were disposed around a great court-like space surrounded by a colonnade, similar in all respects to the atrium, but usually larger, handsomer, and more richly furnished. This second court was called by the Romans the cavædium (*cavum ædium*), and by the Greeks, the peristyle, a name also applied to it by the Romans. The open space in its midst was arranged like that in the centre of the atrium, as a cistern or impluvium, or was turfed and adorned with flower-beds and fountains. The space between the two courts (the atrium and the cavædium) was occupied by a single room with passages at the sides,[13] which gave communication between the front and rear parts of the house. This room, called the tablinum,[14] was specially arranged for a peculiar purpose. It contained the family documents, the monuments of its history, as well as the ancestral masks; and was so arranged that the side facing the atrium was left open, and could only be shut in by heavy curtains, whilst that towards the peristyle had a low parapet wall, the opening over which was also curtained. When the curtains on both sides were open, one could look from the atrium through the peristyle into the garden, with which it often terminated. The question suggested by the special object of our present investigation is this: Was such an arrangement of the house favorable or unfavorable to a rich style of ornamentation? At first sight we should be rather inclined to regard it as unfavorable for decorative purposes. If we consider that all the rooms were lighted either from the atrium or the cavædium,

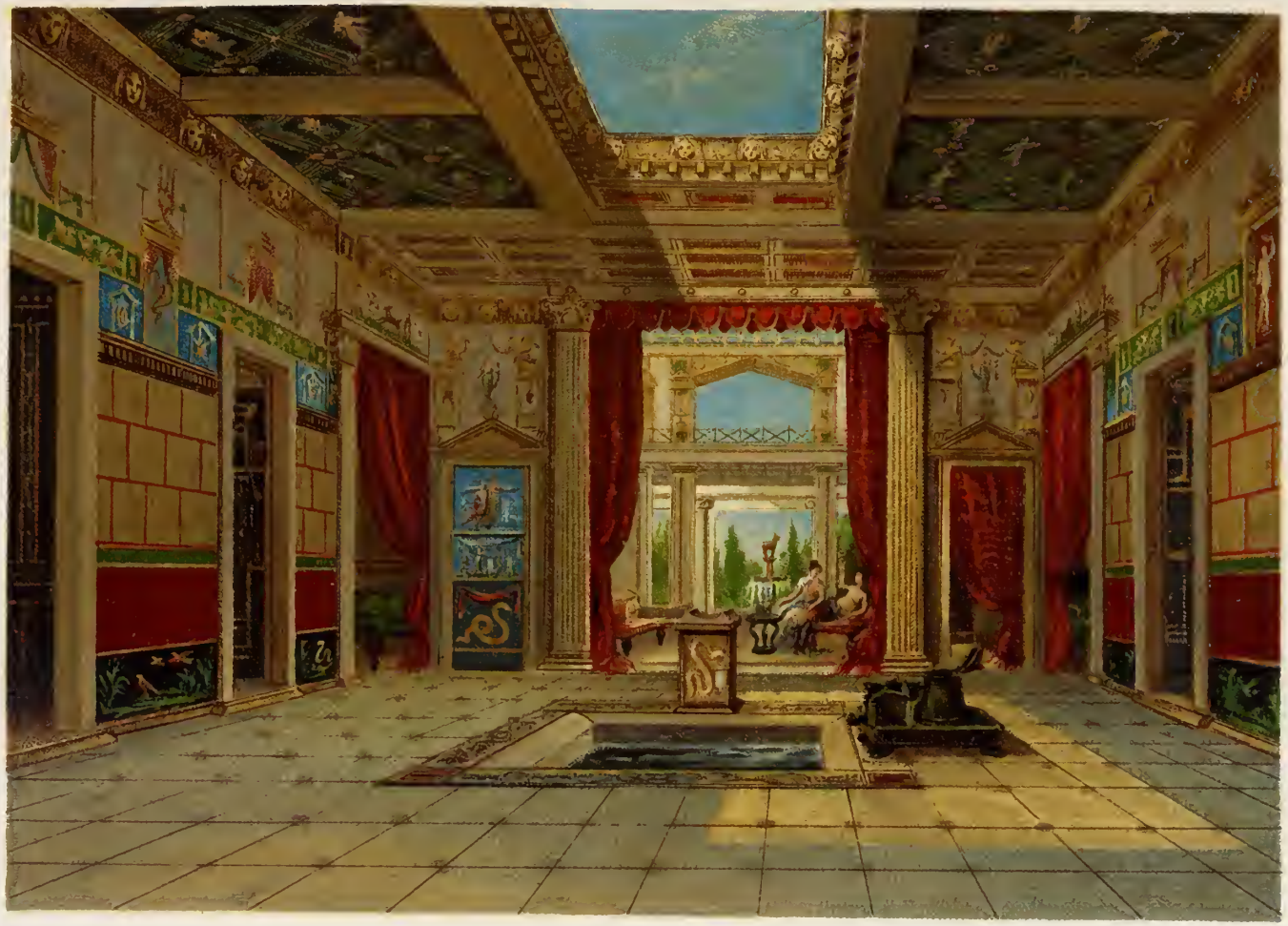
Distribution of rooms

Whether favorable or not for decorative purposes.

of time the old column-supported atrium was so changed that it became exactly like the cavædium, so that it is not strange that most of the Pompeian atria are like cavædia, excepting in point of size.

[13] The passages on either side of the tablinum were called *fauces*.

[14] The tablinum was what the English call the "muniment" room. "Tablina codicibus implebantur et monumentis rerum in magistrata gestarum." (Plin., *H. N.*, XXXV. 22.)



INTERIOR VIEW OF THE HOUSE OF SALLUST, POMPEII. RESTORED.

that for the most part the light penetrated into them only through a door with a grated opening above it, and that it was never direct, as the doors and the windows were alike overshadowed by the roof of the colonnade, it will seem to us as if these enclosed spaces, despite the great brilliancy of the Southern skies, could have received only dim light, very unsuited to the enjoyment of elaborate decoration. But the antique dwelling-house had one advantage in its arrangement which a modern house lacks, — an advantage which more than overbalanced the disadvantage in question. We are usually surrounded by four perpendicular and rectangular walls. We can seldom, at least comparatively, look from one room into another, except through open folding-doors; and more rarely still are the decorations of two adjoining rooms arranged with reference to a combined effect. In the antique house, on the contrary, one had varied views and vistas on all sides, made up of columns and pillars, with shifting lights and shadows; and if the curtains of the tablinum were drawn aside, any one who stepped out of the passage-way from the vestibule into the atrium could look through the whole interior of the house through the atrium, tablinum, and cavædium, with their colored columns, richly decorated walls, statues, fountains, and garden, over all which shone the bright sky, here pouring in brilliant light, there enough only to produce a twilight effect in the darker rooms. (See Plate III.)

Fig. 23.



Special advantages.

This peculiarly propitious arrangement must have induced a richer style of ornamentation, as soon as art was applied to the adornment of private houses, and it must also have led to a more general and well-balanced system of ornamentation aiming at harmony of effect. Hence we find that Pompeian

Rich decoration universal.

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houses are far more richly and gayly decorated than modern dwellings, if we compare those belonging to owners and inhabitants of a similar rank. The houses of simple citizens are adorned with the finest paintings, with artistic and elaborate mosaics, and with rare works in marble, such as fountains, statues, and statuettes. The famous *Battle of Alexander*, which is both the costliest mosaic and the most beautiful of all extant antique pictures, was found in a private house which probably belonged to a wine-merchant.[15]

At Vienna, and especially at Paris, it is customary to decorate reception-rooms as richly as possible, and to leave the living-rooms and chambers unadorned and bare. This is because ornament is only an outside show, a pure conventionality, and not a matter of vital concern and of daily enjoyment, or a necessity of culture. At Pompeii, on the contrary, every corner of the house is equally and harmoniously decorated, and ornament finds a place in the darkest rooms, even in the little bedrooms, which a stranger never entered. No sort of difference is made between the show-rooms and those devoted entirely to family uses. The owner of the house has adorned them all for his own enjoyment, because he has a feeling for art.[16]

Difference between ancient and modern object in decoration.

External decoration simple.

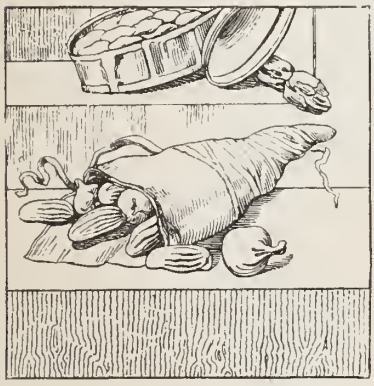
This explains why all the resources of art were expended upon the interior of the antique house, and none upon its exterior. There is not a single house in Pompeii whose street front can lay claim to architectural importance, not one which can boast a façade decorated with columns or pillars. The low unsightly wall, only partly if at all surmounted by

[15] This mosaic, one square palm of which is said to contain no less than 6,900 pieces of marble, was found in the so-called House of the Faun, on the 24th of October, 1831. It is probably a copy of a renowned picture, and represents the combat between Alexander and Darius, in the plain of Issus. Helbig (op. cit. p. 44) says that as an abstract of this composition has been found upon certain Greco-Etruscan vases, the mosaic must be of much later date than the original. (See Plate XXXII.)

[16] Niccolini's great work on Pompeii, now in course of publication at Naples, contains by far the most valuable series of plates of the decorations, furniture, etc., etc., of houses; though Roux's *Herc. et Pompeii*, 8 vols., and the works of Zahn and Gruner are important.

an upper story, is finished off with stucco, and at the utmost marked with joints to imitate cut stone. This stucco is either simply painted in different colors, which divide the face of the wall into regular spaces, or a pseudo-rustic effect is given by cutting lines into its surface. The impression which the visitor receives upon entering the house is all the stronger by reason of its unexpectedness. It is here as in Oriental cities, where, while walking through narrow streets, between yellow clay-plastered walls pierced with small, insignificant windows, no one has any suspicion of what those walls conceal. But once admitted within the low and narrow door, one is dazzled by the splendor of gilded and colored ornament, costly variegated carpets, shining tiles, and gorgeous furniture. So was it in Pompeii. Wherever the eye turned it rested on color and decoration. The hand of Art had touched and glorified everything.

Fig. 24.



Internal splendor.

Among the arts which helped to produce this rich decoration at Pompeii that of painting stood foremost. If costly marbles and other kinds of stone, and especially all sorts of plastic ornament, were less extensively employed than, for example, in the great palaces of Rome, the reason was partly that Pompeii was only a provincial town of medium rank, and partly that sixteen years before its final destruction it had suffered from an earthquake, and been hastily and superficially restored. Very seldom, therefore, do we find wall and columns made either wholly or partially of marble; though when this is the case, the noble material is richly ornamented and very carefully worked.[17] Ornamental stucco-work, which

Stucco-work.

[17] The practice of covering walls with thin slabs of marble (crustæ marmoreæ) was introduced by Mammurra in his house on the Cælian Hill (Plin., Lib. XXXVI. Ch. VI. 7). Walls were also decorated with glass mosaic, stucco, and fresco. The "tectorium opus," or ground for fresco laid upon brick walls, was com-

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the ancients executed with the greatest skill in a fine material of extreme hardness and durability, is far more common. As, however, ornaments in stucco were almost always colored, they must be classed according to their effect, under the head of decorative wall painting, which we are now to consider in its strict sense.

Wall painting.

This pictorial decoration begins with the laying on of colors, elevated to artistic dignity by the arrangement and juxtaposition of tones, and rises to the treatment of figures, which, however, from their position upon the wall, their combination with the ornamental system, and the manner in which they are treated, are genuine decorations, and never easel pictures, worked out independently.[18]

The persistent system which lies at the base of all these

posed of three coats of mortar containing quicklime, and three coats mixed with pulverized marble, which gave a fine-grained and highly polished surface.

[18] In the first half of the fifth century B. C. the walls of first-class houses in Greece and Sicily were often incrusted with gold and ivory, as, for example, the house of Hiero at Syracuse, which was plundered by Verres the prætor, whom Cicero exposed in the Verrine orations. In the fourth century the words *ποίκιλαι* and *ποίκιλματα*, used in reference to house decoration, seem rather to imply ornamental decoration than decoration by means of pictures painted on panels. As sacred offerings (*ἀνάθηματα*) such pictures were let into the walls of temples in the centre of painted panels at a very early period; but they were neither so placed, nor copied in fresco upon the walls of private houses, until after the death of Alexander the Great. The plundering of the East by this monarch and his generals, which enriched Greece, and the conquest of the Roman generals, which filled Rome with masterpieces, induced private persons to form collections of works of art to adorn magnificent residences, which competed with the temples and great public buildings in their wealth of pictures and statues. These were not, however, displayed as in modern times, as separate entities in a room, but with a truly antique feeling, in such a way as to connect them with their surroundings. The pictures were let into the walls, which were divided into panels by pilasters (*παραστάδες*), serving as backgrounds to statues. The demand for easel pictures then increased, and the works of Pausias, Antiphilos, Kolotes, and Kallikles were greatly in demand. These, and still more the works of the finest Greek painters of the best period, such as Zeuxis, Timanthes, Apelles, etc., could only be bought by the very wealthy. This led to the copying of pictures in fresco upon the walls, which was a cheap and rapidly executed process. To this may be partially attributed that decadence of art which showed itself during the reign of Nero (see the *Satyricon of Petronius*, 83); for as artists found a less ready sale for easel pictures, they gradually ceased to paint them. Pinacotheks, i. e. picture-galleries, came into fashion, and the walls of houses were decorated by the

decorations is recognizable even in the most elaborate, but shows itself most clearly in the simplest, with which we may begin. The wall is never covered with one large picture or with several pictures, but its surface is first laid out in regular spaces, both perpendicular and horizontal. A broad base or dado extending horizontally is always set off at the bottom of the wall, and this is distinguished from the remaining space by its different tone of color. A similar strip, serving as a frieze, is cut off at the top of the wall by a cornice-like band. Each of these three spaces has also its peculiar naturally corresponding divisions, but it is especially the middle and most important space which is perpendicularly divided into several sections, almost always uneven in number, so that the middle contains the largest space, having one or two smaller spaces on either side. (See Fig. 22, p. 11.)

Fig. 25.



Division of wall by color.

The distribution and juxtaposition of the colors are connected with this fundamental arrangement. Occasionally we find that the background of the whole wall is the same throughout all its divisions; in which case variety, life, and effect are given to this uniformity by the use of richer and gayer colors in the ornamental parts. As a rule, the three principal divisions — base, middle space, and frieze — are separated from one another by different tints; and this often leads us to observe what has sometimes been laid down as a rule, that the tints increase in brightness from below upwards. Thus we frequently find the base black, the middle space red, and the frieze white. But exceptions to this rule are perhaps as frequent as its observance; as, for example, where the base is yellow,

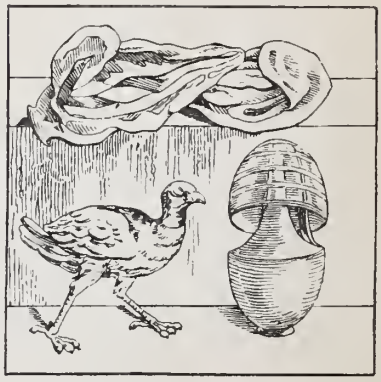
Gradation upwards from dark to light.

fresco-painter. Thus decoration, which had been structural, became pictorial, as we see it at Herculaneum and Pompeii, where painted pilasters and frescos take the place of real pilasters and panel pictures.

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the central space red, and the frieze black. There is certainly no stringent æsthetic law for either system, although it is quite certain that increased lightness of color upwards makes an enclosed space appear higher and more airy. The panels into which the central field is perpendicularly divided have usually one and the same ground-tint, although not unfrequently these also are differently colored, as, for instance, red and green; in which case the side spaces correspond, as they are painted in the same hues.

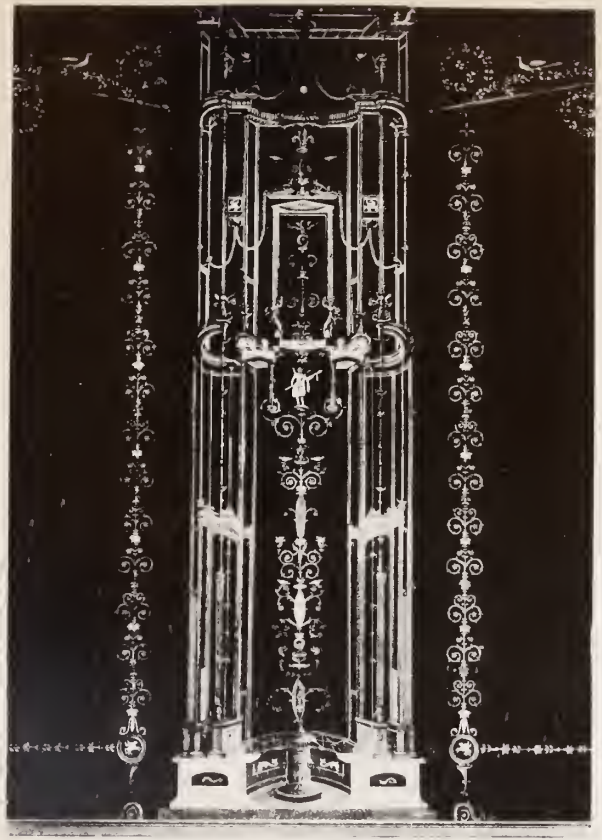
Fig. 26.



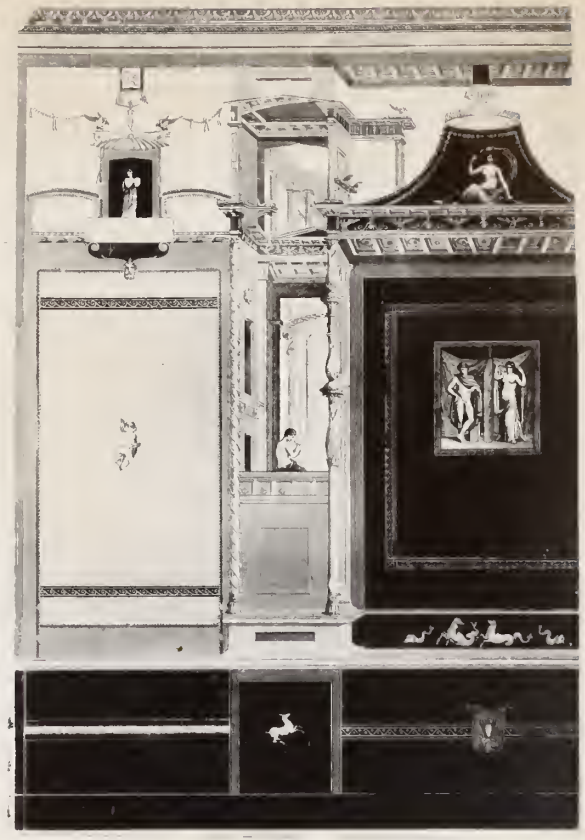
Our modern ideas would lead us to expect bright tones everywhere, feeling, as we should, that the rooms, being imperfectly and for the most part indirectly lighted, would need to have their comparative gloom brightened by gay coloring. But this was not the point of view taken by the antique decorator, or by the inhabitants of these rooms. The artist thought so little about brightness and gloom, that he not infrequently made the ground-tint of the whole wall black, merely enlivening it by brilliantly colored and often exceedingly graceful ornament. (Plate IV., A.) He may have reasoned that the black wall would not only give great effect to arabesques, but that it would furnish an admirable background for the occupants of the room, against which their heads would appear most effectively relieved. The ancient decorative painter aimed at producing a generally harmonious as well as a rich effect,[19] and with this end in view he did not use those washed-out hues which suit our modern taste, such as delicate rose, pale lilac, bluish white, and light gray. He did indeed break his colors,

Antique point of view.

[19] This is shown in the peculiar harmony existing between the tone of the central fresco and that of the surrounding wall, noticeable in freshly unearthed chambers. "If," says Helbig (op. cit. p. 339), "the wall is red, the panel subject is colored lightly with warm shadows; if, on the contrary, it be dark, almost black, the central picture is painted on a low scale, with corresponding shadows."



A



B

so as to avoid gaudy and glaring effects, but he never made them weak and faint. Thus the colors used in antique decorative painting are all strong and effective. It is true that white walls are also occasionally met with, but such walls are invariably decorated, both in color and in drawing, in the most lively manner, and not infrequently enriched with a bright red base, so that in these cases we do not think so much about the white wall as about the charming, airy, graceful ornament upon it, which seems doubly brilliant, sympathetic, and attractive on account of its light background. It is evidently the intention throughout that the detail should not catch the eye or arrest the attention by its execution and perfection, but rather that wherever we look we may see harmonious and well-toned colors, and be above all charmed and captivated by the inexhaustible variety of the ornaments,—those children of a fancy which the Graces themselves would seem to have created, whose freedom knows no limits but those set by the laws of beauty and grace.

Strong and effective colors used.

The horizontal and perpendicular division of the wall decoration of which I have spoken is merely a groundwork for richly elaborated ornamentation. The dividing members, the bands, stripes, bars, or borders, very seldom assume architectural forms such as those of cornices, mouldings, etc.; but they take (the perpendicular especially) a freer, often arabesque-like character. Even when the perpendicular bands or stripes are treated like supports to a cornice, and have the form of small columns, these are so excessively slender (Plate IV., B), so reed-like and so crowded together, so entwined with flowers and crowned with leaves, so like the stalks of flowers, that one loses all architectural association with them, and regards them merely as creations of a picturesque fancy. In their more extended development they become veritable arabesques, consisting of free ornament made up of conventional and naturalistic subjects, combined with the utmost regularity, sometimes springing from a vase, sometimes growing from a plant. Garlands of fruit and flowers, and wreaths of leaves of the most delicate formation, are often substituted for mouldings or orna-

Arabesque-like character of designs.

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ment, either hanging perpendicularly against the wall or crossing the panels in festoons and hanging lines which, by their variously curved arches, give rise to new series of divisions. These are themselves filled with all sorts of pictures, while here and there small birds of bright plumage, tiny genii, or other charming little figures, rock and swing upon the garlands. The special place where such subjects are treated is the frieze.

Panel subjects.

The picture-like decoration of the inner panels is opposed

Fig. 27.



to the dividing architectural members and to the surrounding and enframing ornament. The subjects treated in the panels embrace, apparently, the whole field of art, from still-life and the most unimportant landscape to pictures of a historico-mythological kind. I say apparently, for these pictures never lose their decorative character. We find first, small single figures, such as butterflies, birds, stags, or other animals, floating in the midst of the dark panels; then human figures, genii, loves, satyrs, nymphs and bacchantes, cithern-players and dancers; then small groups of two figures, a centaur

reined in and driven by a bacchante who kneels upon his back (Fig. 23), another playing the lyre, with a boy striking the cymbals, and others joyfully lifting their lovely female companions aloft. All these figures stand out against the dark background as if flying in the air. They have no support, no standing-ground to connect them with the earth. They are fantastic images, and pretend to be nothing more; but what they are meant to be, that they are completely,—the most charming living forms, in the most captivating attitudes, with grace in every line and fold of their airy draperies. In some cases small pictures take the place of these floating figures, like them unframed, but no longer without foothold or standing-ground. Girls gathering flowers are represented in these pictures, also objects of many kinds, such as fruits, and especially all sorts of eatables, which last are for the most part represented in the dining-rooms (Figs. 24, 25, 26); little landscapes, a pair of birds, a pair of ducks in a pond, amusing genre pictures, such as scenes out of comic plays, or painters' studios filled with little pygmies humorously treated.

Framed pictures.

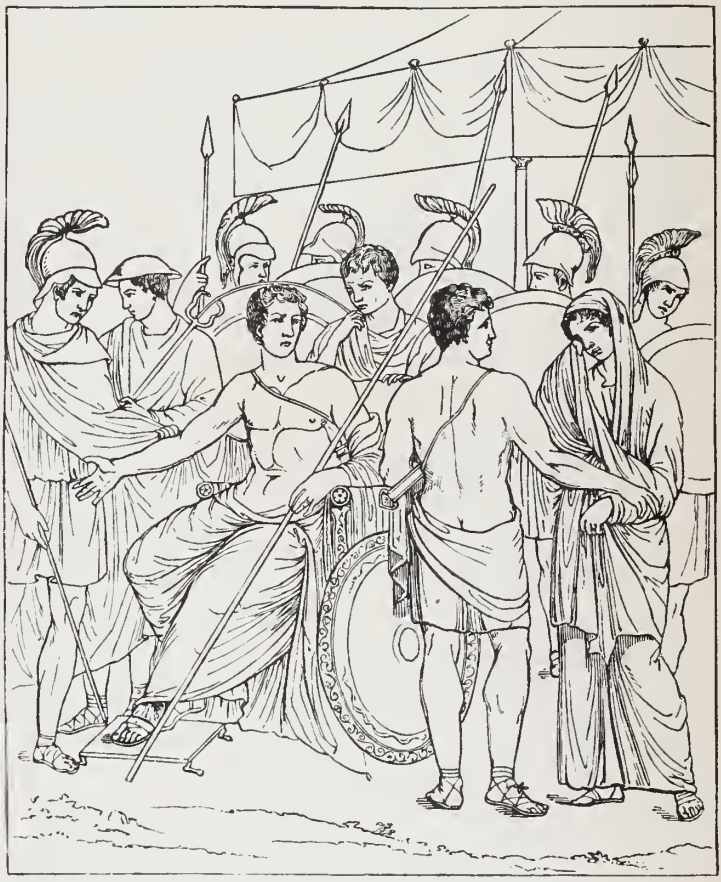
Following the process of development, we come to framed pictures; the frames are, however, nothing more than broad red lines, which separate the picture from the background. Here also we begin with small landscapes and genre pictures, the former of which rise in importance to scenes of wild, fantastic, mountainous scenery, animated by such figures as those of Perseus and Andromeda (Fig. 27); the latter, to tragic scenes taken from historico-mythologic subjects, such as the sacrifice of Iphigenia, or the carrying off of Briseis from the tent of Achilles (Fig. 28). All these pictures differ essentially in their kind from modern easel pictures with which we adorn our rooms, and in all their points of difference approach more closely to decoration. Our modern easel pictures have an independent origin, and are isolated as much as possible in the room by gilt frames. The concentrated light which often comes from a very small opening produces more striking and abrupt contrasts of light and shade, and this makes it all the more difficult to bring them into a given or required har-

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How treated.

mony with the objects around them. Antique wall-paintings, on the contrary, were all painted in an even, clear, quiet daylight; the figures in them were shadowless, they contained no sombre depths of tone, and the character of their composition

Fig. 28.



was simpler and more sober than that to which we are accustomed; for there were no over-crowded figures, no vigorous foreshortenings, or exaggerated attitudes.[20] For all these

[20] The wall-paintings in Pompeian houses seem to us coarsely painted, because we see them as they were not intended to be seen, in a broad, direct light. Under the soft, evenly distributed light which fell upon them through the openings in the roof, they must have produced a much more finished effect. As with antique statues and pediment groups, the very perfection of their adaptation to

reasons they entered much more readily into the general scheme of decoration for which the artist himself had planned them as an integral part of their surroundings. Furthermore, their subjects either harmonized directly with the object for which the room was used, as was usually the case in dining-rooms,[21] or, if historical or mythological, were taken from a circle of legends with which every one who saw them was perfectly familiar, so that, unlike our historical paintings, they required neither inscriptions nor explanations.

Sketchy character of mural paintings.

These antique wall-paintings, being intended for decoration, were also painted in a decorative style; that is to say, they were sketched rapidly with a light and bold touch, and for the most part hastily executed; so hastily, indeed, that in many cases the outlines are lost in the background, and can with difficulty be traced. But, slightly defined though they be, they are painted with a lightness and sureness which gives them an extraordinary artistic charm, for which we willingly give up laborious finish, unless it be combined with other excellences. Moreover, these paintings, although merely decorative, are each and all conspicuous for that pervading brightness and charm, that inexhaustible feeling for beauty inherent to the Greek nature, which animated and filled even those artists whom we are in the habit of regarding as mere artisans. There was, however, something quite peculiar about the rank and calling of these old decorative painters which placed them on a very different footing from those of the present time. To speak generally, painting, with a few rare

Artistic standing of these mural decorators.

original conditions puts them at a terrible disadvantage when placed in museums, on a level with the eye, and under a totally different light from that which the artist intended for them.

[21] Such direct harmony between decorative subject and room destination is to be found in mosaic pavements as well as in mural paintings. The most familiar example of it is that of the pavement of a dining-room made by Sosus, who, during the reign of Attalus II., king of Pergamus (B. C. 159–138), attained great fame as a worker in mosaic. It represented the floor of a room after a banquet, before it had been swept. Fragments of eatables lay strewn about, and in the centre there was a vase filled with water, upon whose rim doves perched to drink. The celebrated mosaic of the doves in the Capitoline Museum at Rome is supposed to be a copy of the masterpiece of Sosus which is described by Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXXVI. Ch. XXV. sect. 60.

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exceptions, is now limited to easel pictures; whereas in ancient times, on the contrary, painting, including the very highest examples, was altogether mural, and, therefore, purely decorative. Easel pictures were certainly painted by the ancients, but they were as much the exceptions as wall-paintings are to-day. No distinction was then made between artists and decorative painters, whereas it now unfortunately exists, and in consequence of it we have a surfeit of easel painters. The decorative artists who were employed at Herculaneum and Pompeii were second or even third rate workmen, who may properly be classed with those modern painters who work for Art Unions, and are specially occupied as house decorators. We are not therefore to conclude that the Pompeian frescos are generally copies of renowned Greek pictures, the rather as they never repeat themselves; for the same subjects are always treated differently. On the contrary, they are to be regarded as the original conceptions of the artists who executed them.[22]

Pompeian frescos probably original designs.

In the kinds of antique wall decoration which I have thus far described, the wall is invariably treated as a wall, and never changed into a garden or a wood, or any other object, as is often the case in our day. Something analogous is, however, also to be found among the ancients, who, with the consciousness of great technical skill and precision of touch, and impelled by the strength of a lively imagination, did not submit willingly to artificial restraints or hesitate to overleap them.

The wall treated as a wall.

[22] Some of the wall-paintings at Herculaneum and Pompeii are undoubtedly original compositions, but an equal or even a greater number are either absolutely repetitions or slightly varied or abridged copies of easel pictures by famous masters.

Thus, for instance, in one of the Andromedas after Nikias in the House of the Dioscuri at Pompeii, the group of two sitting female figures is wanting. (See Helbig, *Catalogue*, Nos. 1186 and 1189.) So again in the fresco representing Io at Pompeii, there are but two figures, those of Io and Argus, while in the repetition at Rome there are three, Io, Argus, and Hermes. (See Helbig, *Cat.*, p. 141.) The compositions of renowned masters were often adopted by Greeks, Romans, and Etruscans as typical treatments of subjects to be repeated like forms of speech, consecrated by usage. In this way many of these Pompeian frescos are connected with Hellenic originals which the fresco-painter repeated from memory, without the help even of a sketch. In thus passing from mind to mind, old types were so modified that they are often hardly recognizable.

Style prevalent under Augustus.

This is fully shown in a style which was introduced in the days of Augustus, and in the course of a few decades was greatly developed.[23] It consisted in adorning the walls with painted architecture in perspective, having recesses and projections, views and vistas, apparently intended to deceive the eye. In this way, open doors, lintels, and pediments, with their portals, pillars, gables, and projecting column-supported canopies and balconies, were pictorially represented. Architectural perspectives, with halls and colonnades, galleries, balustrades, and stairways, opened out to the eye, looking like a continuation of the room upon whose walls these objects were delineated, and as if its tenant could pass unhindered through the painted door, out among the painted buildings. In order to render the delusion more complete, artists peopled these fancifully created spaces not only with fantastic creatures, such as loves or genii, but with real persons, who dwelt in them, passed their lives in them, leaned over the balcony-railings, or came out of the open doors half concealed behind the porticos, as if to listen to the living people in the real apartment. (See Plate IV., B.)

Fig. 29.



There can be no question that all this sort of decoration, in so far as it aims at deception, is false in principle, and for this reason it was severely criticised and denounced even in ancient times.[24] But the ancient artist took good care

Why criticised.

[23] Marcus Ludius is spoken of by Pliny (*N. H.*, Lib. XXXV. Ch. X. sect. 37, ed. Silig) as the painter who in the time of Augustus introduced the species of mural decoration referred to in the text. This Ludius is not to be confounded with him of the same name who decorated the temple of Juno at Ardea with paintings at a much more remote period. (See article *Ludius*, in Silig's *Catalogus Artificum*, p. 245.)

[24] Among those ancient authors who

CHAP. I.

to treat his subject so as to do away with the very deception which he had apparently aimed at. His architecture was no real architecture, but a pure creation of his wayward fancy. His pillars are so delicate, so slender, so like reeds and rods, that they could not possibly support the entablature painted above them. All is so airy, so fantastic, so contrary to architectural arrangement, that the thought never enters the mind that these are representations of real buildings, but at the most of fairy palaces, habitable only by creatures divested of their mortal substance. The artists who painted them cannot therefore be blamed as if they had aimed at deception or had

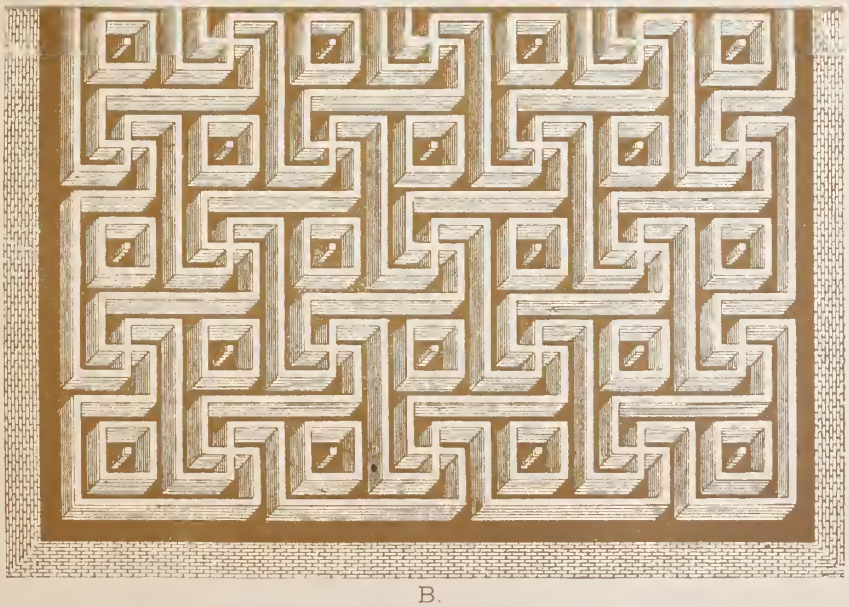
Fig. 30.



most severely criticised this style of painting were Vitruvius and Pliny. After pointing out that the fresco-painters of former times took their models from nature, Vitruvius (*De Arch.*, Lib. VII. Ch. X.) says, that nowadays taste has become so depraved that it finds pleasure in covering walls with monsters rather than with representations of truthful objects. "Reeds are substituted for columns, harpoons and mural shells with curled leaves and light volutes for pediments; candelabra are made to support little temples; numerous stalks which have taken root spring from them adorned with volutes, out of which rise little figures without rhyme or reason, some having men's faces, others the heads of animals. . . . . These are things which do not, cannot, and never did exist. Nevertheless, these follies are so much the rage, that, for want of fitting censure, the arts are rapidly falling into decadence." In conclusion he says, "What I could do I have done, to expose the fatal error into which mural decorators have fallen." "Those illustrious painters, Apelles, Echion, Melanthius, and Nicomachus" (*N. H.*, Lib. XXXV. Ch. VII. sect. 32), says Pliny, "whose single pictures were counted as the chief treasures of those who possessed them, used but four colors; now-



A.

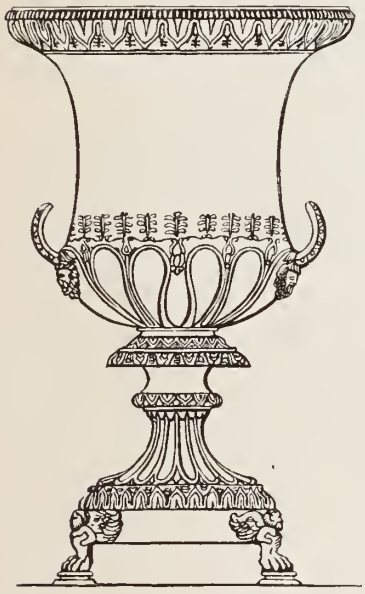


B.

POMPEIAN FLOOR-MOSAICS.

fashioned an impossible architecture. The very unreal nature of their buildings, that which stamps them as purely fanciful and decorative, is their justification. Wherever they have erred and produced what is actually objectionable, their mistake has been that they have made their buildings so over-rich in detail, so variegated and so fantastic, that they disturb and weary the eye with their richness.

Fig. 31.



Mosaic floors.

We cannot so easily acquit those artists whose province it was to decorate the floor, of the charge of unjustifiable deception. Where the walls were so profusely adorned, the floors and ceilings had to be decorated with equal richness; and at an early period mosaics worked in geometrical patterns were substituted for a pavement which had been either perfectly plain, or made of pounded and polished bits of different-colored stones. The tone of color was kept more quiet than that of the walls, as was suitable to the uses of a floor; still, in these applications of mosaic to floors, correct limitations were transgressed in two directions.

First, ornamentally, where a geometrical juxtaposition of many-colored bits of stone was so used, by taking the dark-toned for the shadows and the clear for the lights, as to produce the appearance of a sharp-angled rilievo, and thus to deceive the eye and foot. Together with many well-designed and perfectly legitimate mosaic pavements at Pompeii (Plate V., A), these vicious ones are frequently to be met with, not only set in square-blocked, checker-board patterns, but with

Certain pavements vicious in design.

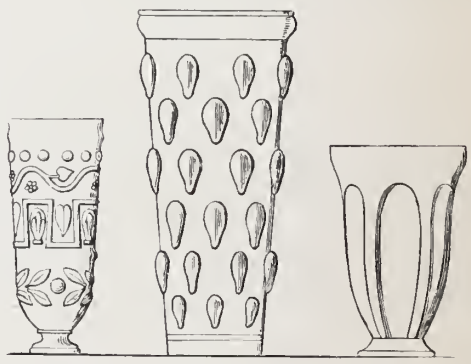
adays with all the hues of the rainbow on their palettes our painters fall far below them in excellence. Everything was better when resources were few."

Chap. I.

others composed of rich tracery, in which the gaps do not appear to be filled at all. (Plate V., B.)

Second, where the great store set by a Pompeian citizen upon a handsome pavement led to the use of patterns made up not only of flatly treated, conventionalized animals, but also of human figures, and even of historical scenes, even more ambitious in style and complicated in action than those which adorned the walls.[25] However contrary to a right instinct it may be to tread human figures under foot, and, still more, to trample upon historical scenes, such as famous battles and heroic deeds, it is evident that the great object of the Greeks and Romans of that day was to make their floor decoration correspond in richness with that of the walls.

Fig. 32.



The ceiling.

The taste which required the use of elaborate ornament in every part, even of a secluded living-room, impelled them to bestow a full share of it upon the ceiling, which we in our day

[25] Pavements in Greek and Roman houses were laid either in brick, in marble tiles, or in mosaic. The latter came into use at Rome as a means of decoration, for floors, walls, and ceilings, at the beginning of the Empire, after having been long employed in Greece and Asia Minor. In the different kinds of mosaic work, the *Lithostrota*, or stone-laid pavements, worked in regular figures and geometrical patterns, are to be distinguished from the *picturæ de musivos*, i. e. mosaic pictures. The *Musivarii*, or mosaic-picture workers, were artists who understood drawing, shading, and perspective; whereas the *Tessellarii*, who made tessellated pavements, were only skilful workmen. Under the general name of Lithostrotum, the ancients comprehended, (1) the *opus sectile*, formed of thin slices of marble (*crustæ*) of different colors; (2) the *opus tesselatum*, made up of small cubes of marble about three fourths of an inch square; (3) the *opus vermiculatum*, also formed of small cubes of marble of different colors, so arranged as to produce shades of color, reflexes, etc. Of this sort there were three varieties: the major, used for vaults and pavements, being of a coarse quality; the medium, being of a fine kind, employed in wall decoration; and the minor, the finest sort, used only for pictures and portable ornaments. A final variety, the

artistically neglect as much as we do the pavement, fancying that we have satisfied the utmost æsthetic requirements of modern culture when we have hung oil-paintings in gilded frames upon the walls. We know, indeed, comparatively little about the decoration of antique ceilings, for the roofs of the houses at Pompeii are for the most part destroyed; but those which we are able here and there to reconstruct from architectural remains show us conclusively that the ceiling was either painted in many-colored tints, or decorated with colored designs. The starting-point for those decorations in the earlier periods of antiquity seems very naturally to have been the coffered ceiling, that is to say, a ceiling composed of straight beams laid transversely and fitted into one another so as to present square sunken spaces (*lacunaria-laquear*) to one looking up from below. Beams and coffers were polychromatically decorated, and rosettes or similar ornaments, painted in strong, effective colors and heightened with gold, were set into the coffers.[26] The same design was applied to flat and stucco-

Fig. 33.



How decorated.

opus figlinum, or fictile work, often associated with the *vermiculatum*, was composed of artificial cubes of silex and aluminum, colored by metallic oxides. The brilliant effect of the tints was often heightened by placing a sheet of gold-leaf between two pieces of glass, which, having been placed on a slab of vitreous compound, was baked into a solid mass in a furnace, and then broken up for use. Florentine mosaic is the modern form of the *opus sectile* of the Romans, though formed of more precious materials, such as agates, jasper, malachite, etc., etc., instead of marble. Roman mosaic is the modern representative of the old Roman *opus vermiculatum minor*.

[26] This, says Pliny (*N. H.*, XXXV. Ch. II. sect. 40), was first done by Pausias of Sicyon, like Apelles, the pupil of Pamphilius. "Idem et lacunaria primus pingere instituit, nec cameras fuit ante eum taliter adornari mos."

CHAP. I.

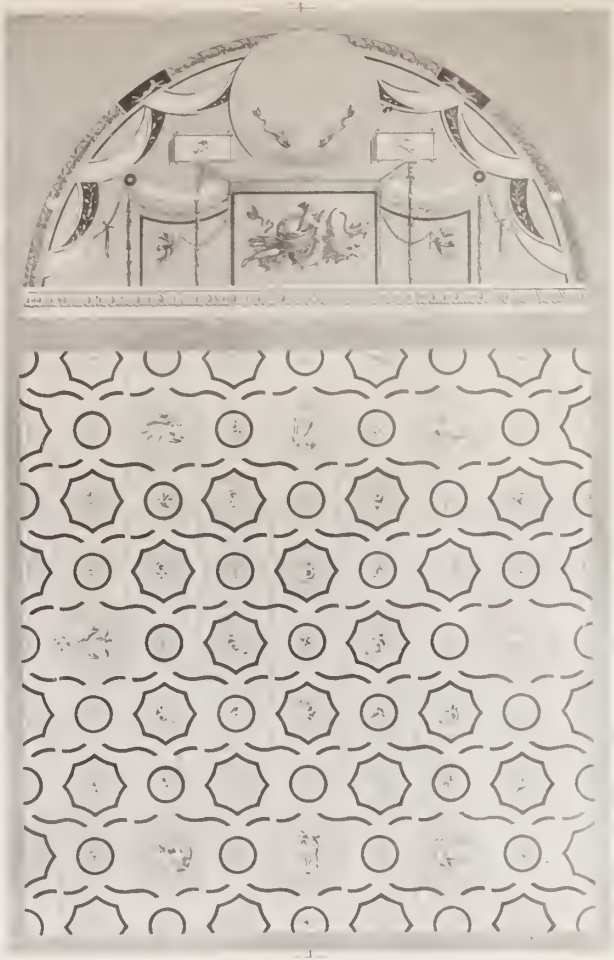
covered ceilings, so that here also the many-colored ornament produced the effect of being divided into square-shaped spaces.

The Pompeian house-painters, however, went far beyond this fashion in decorating the ceiling with the same light, fantastic ornament as that which they applied to the walls. (Plate VI., B.) The ceilings which have so far escaped decay that we can perfectly reconstruct them are all painted in bright colors, upon a white, yellow, or blue ground.[27] This ground is generally divided into freely conceived but always regular spaces by broad red lines or stripes, either straight or curved, and this division is carried out and made more agreeable to the eye by wreaths and garlands of flowers, or by slender rods entwined with leaves. In the spaces thus enframed, lovely, many-colored little birds flutter gayly about or perch upon garlands. The color itself being bright and the decoration airy and graceful, this peopling of the spaces with the winged creatures of the air greatly enhances the impression of lightness and gayety; and it must be confessed that this style of decoration perfectly answers its end, which is to take away all feeling of weight and oppression, and form a fitting climax to the rest of the decoration.

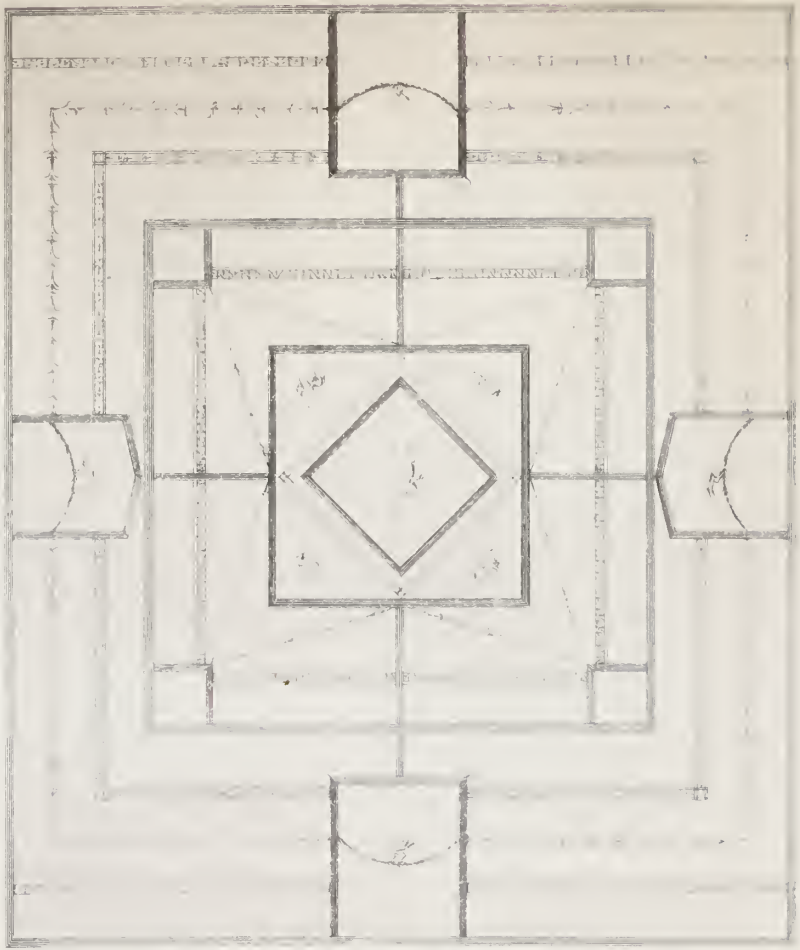
Ceiling of partially roofed rooms, how treated.

Of these two modes of decorating the ceiling, the first, namely, that based upon the division into coffers, was probably most frequently used in the partially roofed rooms, such as the atrium, and the cavædium or peristyle, which had always a larger or smaller opening for light in the middle of the roof. The arrangement of the columns around these openings, and the way in which the beams were laid transversely, very naturally gave rise to a quadratic or rectangular division of the ceiling, and indeed it may be said that the peculiar construction and situation of the rooms in question exercised a general influence on the mode of their decoration, and brought to-

[27] See Plate VI., A., part of the ceiling of a room in the Baths at Pompeii, near the Porta Stabiana, taken from Niccolini's *Pompeii*, Tav. III. Vol. I. The ceiling is divided into coffers decorated with very delicate reliefs in stucco of bacchantes, trophies, triremes, and amorini.



A



B.

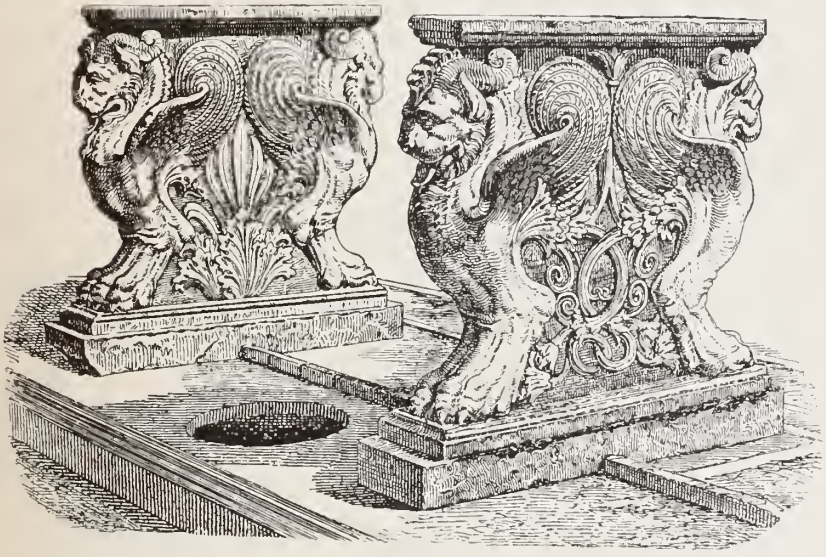
POMPEIAN CEILINGS

gether objects to aid in the artistic effect which were not available in rooms shut in on every side.

Columns painted or covered with stucco, when not of marble.

The walls of the atria and peristyles were of course likewise colored and treated in the manner which I have just described, but here there were also columns, and a free space under the central opening, which could be considered as an unroofed court, and treated and adorned as a garden. In early times there were usually only four columns, at the four corners, to support the inward sloping roof; but, in proportion to the increasing size of the house and the luxury of its inhabitants,

Fig. 34.



their number was so much multiplied, that even in the country town of Pompeii there is a peristyle with forty-four columns. The polychromatic decoration of their shafts and capitals corresponded with that of the surrounding objects; and when the wealth of the householder did not allow him to construct them of variegated marbles, they were covered with stucco and painted: thus, for example, the rather tall base might be colored red, the fluted shaft white, while the different parts and ornaments of the capital were tinted with divers hues, — such as red, blue, and yellow. In the wealthier houses, mar-

CHAP. I.

Statues, columns, and awnings.

ble and bronze figures were placed between the columns, or these intercolumnar spaces were filled with curtains, often of costly and richly colored Oriental tapestry, which could be closed to keep out the sun; while for the same reason a colored awning was sometimes drawn over the whole opening in the roof, thus closing the whole interior against the direct rays of light, and admitting only a dim and colored twilight into the thereby wholly closed area.

Fountains, where placed and how designed.

The arrangement of the open space in the centre of the atrium was a still more important decorative feature. It was originally used only to catch the rain-water, and for this purpose the floor was sunk, and walled up into a shallow tank. As soon, however, as the room was enlarged, it was treated differently; a fountain was then placed in the centre, surrounded with green turf or moss, or with flower-beds, or plants in pots. Such fountains,[28] whose water flowed down over marble steps, or ascending in jets fell again in spray upon the moss, offered the sculptor an opportunity for an infinite variety of gay and graceful designs. In lovely forms of bronze or marble he represented Bacchic figures, river and fountain nymphs, girls with amphoræ, some standing, some reclining, some pouring water from their inverted urns; or perhaps an angler who had dropped his hook into the basin, which figured as a fish-pond, and in fact might be such, as it often contained living fish. The low parapet-walls which sometimes enclosed the space in question were often adorned with paintings of nereids, tritons, and other marine creatures, so that though tropic heats might prevail without, here within doors everything breathed coolness and freshness; everywhere fountains flowed, and flowers filled the air with perfume.

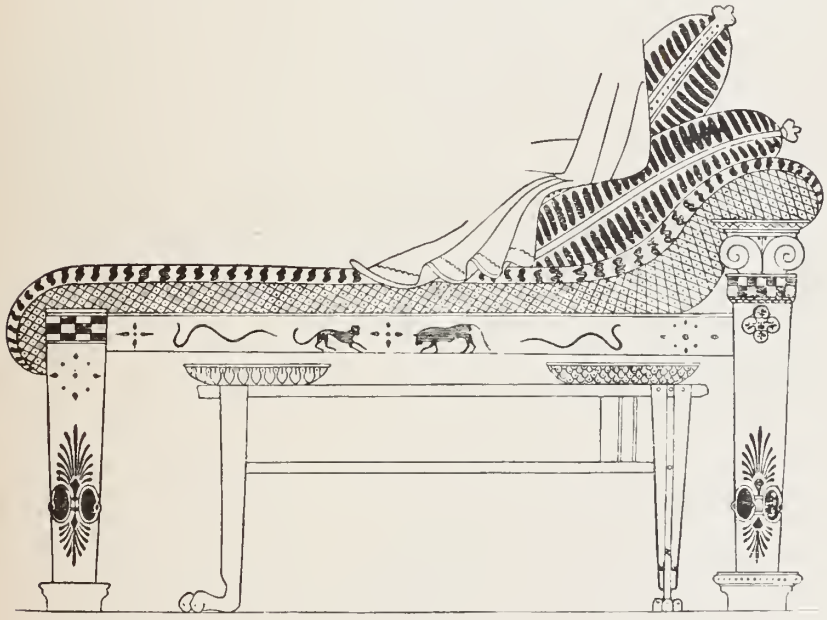
The garden.

The Pompeian liked to satisfy at the same time his love of nature and his love of art; and in most of the larger houses,

[28] Some fountains had several basins (*vasa ænea salicentis aquæ*); others were made in steps, over which the water fell in tiny cascades (*aquarum per gradus fragore cadentium*). In the Museum at Palermo there is a bronze stag which once served to decorate a fountain in the house of Sallust at Pompeii. (*Pollen*, op. cit. Int.)

therefore, a special garden was laid out behind the peristyle, at the rear of the house. As the narrow limits of the town allowed of the appropriation of only a very small space for this purpose, the garden was very properly treated as a part of the house, and of its architecture, and as such was formally planned, with a colonnade on one side at least. A grass-plot, a couple of trees or shrubs, and a few flower-beds would have sufficed; but besides these it always had a fountain, an arbor with columns at the corners, and a balustrade, overrun by a grape-vine or some other creeping plant. This arbor frequently served for a dining-room, and was furnished as a triclinium, with seats or couches fixed to the walls. To make it look as if continued indefinitely, and thus take away any feeling of confinement, the walls which surrounded the little garden were usually painted as if in continuation of it, with balustrades overshadowed by boughs and blossoms, peopled with bright birds; or they were divided by pillars, through whose intervening spaces one caught sight of another and more elaborate garden, with trees, turf, statues, fish-tanks, and

Fig. 35.



Enlarged to the eye by painted walls.

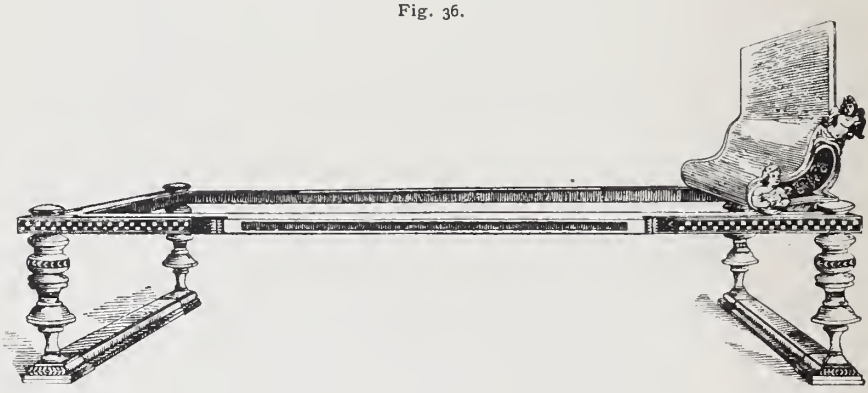
CHAP. I.

fountains. The fancy thus sought to console itself for the poor reality, by means which cannot indeed stand the test of severe criticism, but which under these restricted conditions may be pardoned, as they were so gracefully employed.

Inner apartments, how furnished.

If we now turn our eyes back again from the open spaces to the inner apartments, and consider the latter with reference to the way in which they were furnished, we shall find them, if judged from a modern standpoint, extremely bare and empty. The household appointments of the ancients were limited to what was absolutely necessary. All those manifold contrivances for comfort and luxury found in modern drawing-

Fig. 36.



rooms, which have grown out of the richer development of our social life, were entirely wanting in the antique house. The very artistic completeness of the wall decoration, extending as it did from floor to ceiling, was opposed to the filling up a room with tall chests and *étagères* which would have completely disturbed the effect of the painting. Neither mirrors nor framed pictures found place upon the walls,[29] but this want was in a measure made up for by the extremely rich and

[29] Paintings in frames with flaps, like mediæval tryptics, were sometimes hung on the walls of Roman houses. A painting in the South Kensington Museum, cited by Pollen (op. cit. Int., p. xxiii), shows such an arrangement. Mirrors were either small, for hand use, or large enough to show the whole person. They were made of bronze or silver, and either hung on the wall, or if large set on casters, so that they could be easily moved about a room.

artistic character of each single piece of furniture, if indeed the complete decoration of walls, floors, and ceilings ever allowed it to be felt.

Dining-rooms.

The rooms which required the most elaborate furniture were the dining-rooms. As a matter of course they varied extremely in shape, etc., but their arrangement was essentially the same. In the wealthier houses there were different dining-rooms for different seasons of the year;[30] warm, sunny rooms for winter, cooler rooms with a northern aspect for summer. Lucullus, who is more famous for his luxurious banquets than for his military achievements, had dining-rooms so adapted to the rank of his guests, and to the costliness of the entertainments which he gave in them, that he had merely to indicate the room in which he would dine, and everything was arranged accordingly.[31] In the last days of the Republic, when the Roman magnates feasted hundreds of persons, the banquet was prepared either in the atrium or peristyle, or in immense halls specially built for this purpose, and adorned with rows of columns. Halls of this kind were considered indispensable in the palaces of that time, but even here the tables, although very numerous, were independently placed and arranged as in the triclinium.

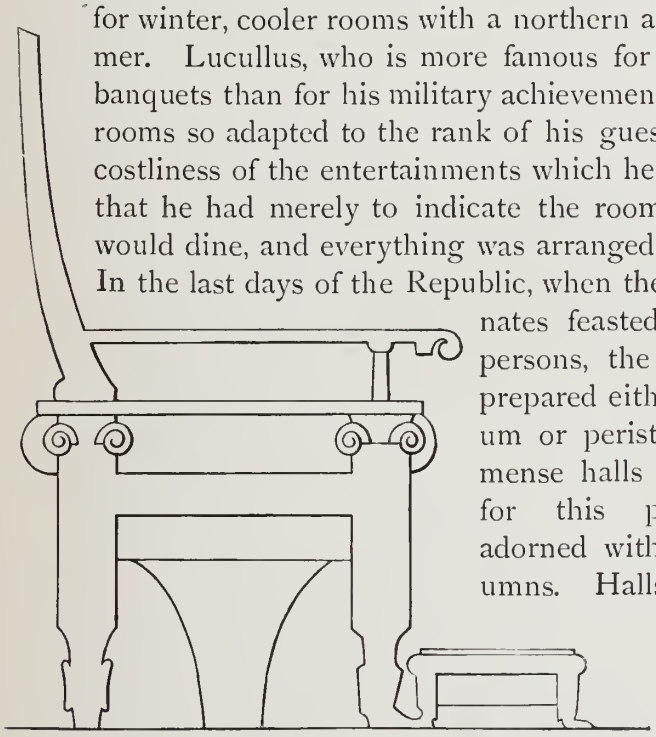


Fig. 37.

[30] Plutarch tells us (*Lucullus*, XXXIX. 5) that, in answer to Pompey's remark that while his house at Tusculum was excellently well arranged for summer, it was not fit for winter habitation, Lucullus answered, "I seem to you to be less wise than the cranes and the storks, because I do not change place according to the season of the year."

[31] This fact is related by Plutarch (*Lucullus*, XL. 6), who says that a supper given in the Hall of Apollo cost two hundred sestertia.

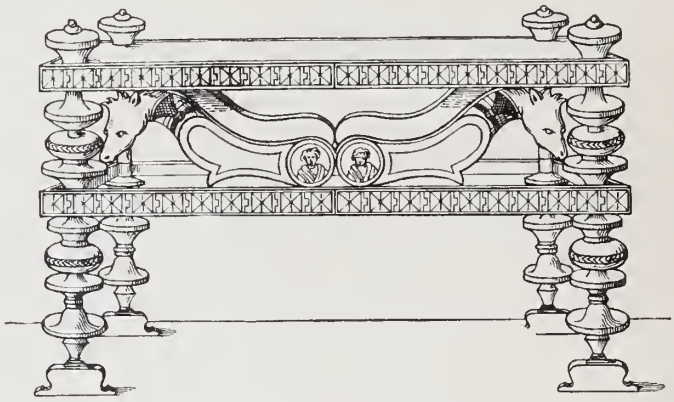
CHAP. I.

The table.

The ordinary dining-room had but one table in the centre, with a cushioned seat, or rather couch, running around three of its sides; for the Greeks, like the Romans, never sat at meals, but ate in a reclining posture.[32] (Plate VII.) The fourth side was left open for the convenience of the servants who waited at table. Each side was arranged for three persons, so that more than nine could not dine at one table; for the ancients had a rule that the number of guests should not be greater than that of the Muses, nor less than that of the Graces. The couch was called the triclinium, from the

The triclinium.

Fig. 38.



number of persons which it accommodated, and this name was subsequently applied to the whole dining-room. The rest of the furniture consisted of tables, upon which costly and sumptuous table-ware was placed for show; artistic vessels made of the precious metals, or of richly wrought Corinthian bronze, mixing-cans, and drinking-cups[33] embossed or

Table-ware.

[32] The custom of reclining at meals was unknown in Greece before the Macedonian period, and at Rome before the Punic wars. Greek couches were made for two persons, the Roman for three. The three *lecti*, forming the triclinium, called *summus*, *medius*, and *imus*, were allotted according to the rank of the guests. Until a late period women sat at meals, "quia turpis visus est in mulière accubitus." Beside the movable table used for each course, there were side tables which could be let down and removed from their supports. The Roman dining-room was also supplied with stools and low benches.

[33] The most precious cups were made of murrhine. This was probably an opaline stone, variegated with delicate colors, something between an opal and feldspar.



chased, or damascened with silver and gold, in the high style of art and finish which the great technical skill in the working of metals made possible. Vessels of precious and semi-precious stones were not wanting, nor exquisitely wrought glassware, either of the kind now called millefiori, or of that formed of layers of glass welded together, with figures and ornaments in relief, or reticulated with a delicacy of execution surpassing even that which distinguishes similar Venetian works of the sixteenth century.[34] In the time of Augustus, both Greeks and Romans had long been connoisseurs in this branch of art, and even then exhibited a preference for antique specimens. (See Figs. 29 to 33, and Plate VIII.)

Shape and finish of dining-tables.

Great stress was laid on the costliness of the table, both as regarded material and artistic finish. The dining-tables were lower than ours, to accommodate the recumbent guests. Their form was influenced by the practice of reclining at meals. As the ancients did not put their legs under the table as we do, the table-top was not made to project as much as that of a modern dining-table. On this account the feet and the framework of antique tables were a great deal more conspicuous, and could consequently be properly much more richly ornamented. Of us who, although living under very different conditions, so often imitate the ancients, it may be said with truth that we throw a great deal of art under the

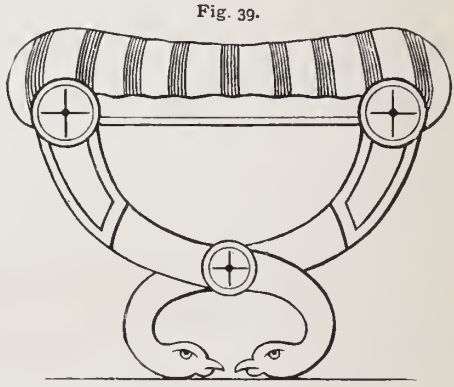
It was soft, fragile, and lustrous. Antiquarians have long disputed as to whether it was not glass or porcelain. Gell says it was called Mirrha di Smyrna, up to the middle of the sixteenth century. (See Becker, *Gallus*, note, Part II. p. 328.) Pliny speaks of two murrhine cups, one of which was sold for 70,000 sestertia, equal to about $3,500; the other to Situs Petronius, for 300,000 sestertia, or about $13,500. When we read of such prices being given for murrhine cups and cypress tables, and are told by Suetonius (*Cæsar*, Ch. L.) that Julius Cæsar gave six million sestertia ($27,000) for a single pearl, we get an idea of the gigantic scale of extravagance prevalent at Rome in imperial times.

[34] The first glass cups were made at Alexandria. Some were colored like Bohemian glass, and decorated with glass pastes imitating precious stones and cameos; some were opaline, others clear as crystal, and others formed of opaque layers welded together like the Portland Vase, in which the white upper layer has been cut away like that of a cameo, leaving a blue ground around the figures. Reticulated cups, such as that at Strasburg, and that in the Casa Trivulzi at Milan, were called *diatreta*, that is, cut through or pierced.

CHAP. I.

table. The feet and framework of tables were often carved in the shape of various kinds of figures, as, for example, the tops rested on the tips of the wings of two griffins (Fig. 34), placed back to back, or more frequently the feet were shaped like the legs of rams, lions, and other animals; never, however, as in modern times, did the legs of tables end in heads resting upon the floor. Among the wealthier Romans, tables were often made entirely of a precious metal, but usually they were of marble or bronze, or they had legs of bronze, which supported a slab of marble or wood. All the skill in metal-work which the ancients possessed was lavished upon these tables. Some were adorned with the richest mosaic, and with tortoise-shell and ivory inlays, but the most costly were those made of Thuia-wood, cut from a species of tree which only grows large enough for such a purpose upon the Atlas Mountains in Africa, and even there but very rarely. These table-tops were taken from a transverse section of the trunk cut near the root, where the beautiful veins were found which made the slab look like a leopard-skin or a peacock's tail. Such a table-top, if really genuine, was worth a million sestertia, or about forty thousand dollars of our money.[35] Table-tops were also veneered with plates of Thuia-wood cut from large sections, in order to bring them within the reach of persons of comparatively small means.

Fig. 39.



Inlays.

Table-tops.

Couches.

The couches in the triclinia of the rich were on the same

[35] Cicero is said to have paid this sum for such a table. (Plin., Lib. XIII. 30.) Although called *mensa citrea*, Pliny distinguishes the wood from citron-wood. It was called *Thuia cypressoides* or *articulata*, and *Citrus* or *Cedrus Atlantica*. These tables, being supported by a single leg or column of ivory, were called *monopodia*.



GRECO-ITALIAN POTTERY.

scale of costliness as their tables. The framework upon which the coverings and cushions were laid was wrought, like the supports of the table, out of costly wood or metal. (Fig. 35.) It was either ornamented in relief, or inlaid with tortoise-shell or ivory. Sometimes the lower part of the couch was draped with silk embroidered with gold-thread, representing figure-scenes, such as hunting-parties or banquets. The soft cushions of these couches were stuffed with wool, and covered with rich purple or variegated fabrics imported from Babylon or Egypt, whilst the round elbow-cushions were embroidered with gold-thread in elaborate patterns. If to all the elements of beauty which we have described as belonging to the dining-rooms of the wealthy, we add the floor strewn with flowers on festal occasions, and covered with fine sawdust mixed with saffron, cinnabar, and the sparkling powder of mica, we must confess, that, although scantily furnished according to our modern ideas, they were by no means wanting in splendor and artistic beauty.

Fig. 40.



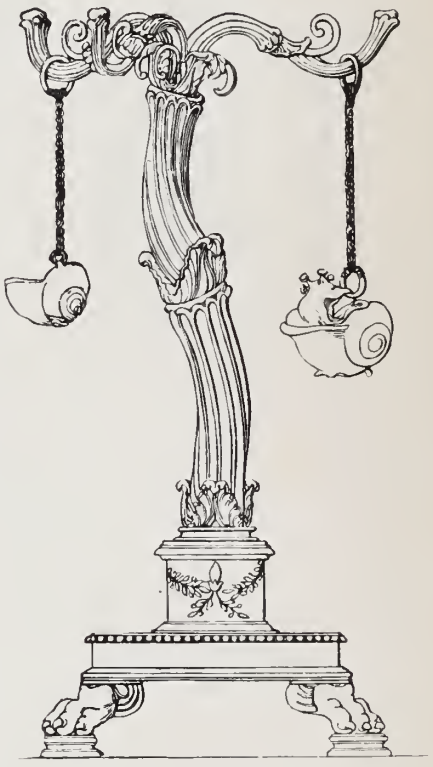
An ornamented couch was the most important piece of furniture (Fig. 35), not only in the dining-room but also in other apartments, as, for instance, in the master's study; for when the Roman or the Greek read, studied, meditated, wrote, or worked in his own house, he did so in a reclining posture, while near him stood a small table with writing materials upon it. In the bedroom (which was usually divided by curtains into three parts, the first for an attendant, the second for a dressing-room, and the third for a sleeping-place), the bed was almost the only article of furni-

The bedroom.

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ture.[36] (Fig. 36.) For this reason it was all the more richly adorned, its framework being carved and inlaid like that of the couch in the dining-room, and its covering composed of costly Oriental textiles, of which the possessor was extremely proud. Martial tells us of a gentleman who feigned illness and took to his bed that he might have an opportunity of displaying the marvellous coverings which he had just received from Alexandria to the friends who visited him.

Fig. 41.



Chairs and benches.

In the apartments assigned especially to women, as, for instance, in the rooms where they received visitors, chairs and seats (Figs. 37, 38, and 39) were more common than couches, excepting in the boudoir, where the Roman lady could not dispense with a luxurious lounge. Benches were more especially used in public places or in the poorer class of dwellings, but in the houses of the wealthy they were confined to the vestibule, and perhaps the atrium, where, however, they were stationary, or attached to the wall. In the exedra, a reception-room which was always decorated as handsomely as possible, and which corresponded nearly to our modern drawing-room, there were usually no other pieces of furniture except the table and chairs. The women always sat, whilst the men reclined, nor did the former adopt the practice of reclining at meals until a comparatively late period. Ancient pictures invariably represent them as sitting

[36] The figure represents a very elegant bronze bed ornamented with figures and with inlays from Pompeii. Taken from Niccolini's *Pompeii*, Vol. I.

Various kinds of seats.

at table beside their reclining husbands or male guests. Under these circumstances chairs and sofas were of course made quite as elegant as tables, couches, and beds. Their framework was of wood inlaid with tortoise-shell or ivory, or else of marble or metal elaborately adorned with figures and ornaments either incised or in relief. The chairs were also of manifold shapes. There were simple stools without backs, resting upon four crossed or straight legs, terminating in ball-shaped feet turned outwards. Other seats had supports both for the arms and back, covered with cane or leather, while others were stuffed and cushioned. In order to give the body more comfort and the seats more charm, the backs of chairs were for the most part inclined backward, and curved so as to surround and give ease to the back and shoulders. Numerous wall-paintings, and also some sitting statues of women, like that of the younger Agrippina,[37] seem to show us that the Greek and Roman dames carefully studied the art of taking fine and stately attitudes in sitting, of posing their arms, hands, and feet well, and of arranging their draperies in graceful folds. And indeed these figures might serve as models to all mothers and governesses. So, too, in several particulars, we might advantageously model our chairs on the antique pattern, for modern chairs generally are very ill-shaped, and are so convex instead of being concave about the back and shoulders, that the sitter is made ill at ease,

Fig. 42.



[37] See tail-piece to this chapter.

Chap. I.

and is forced from sheer discomfort to change his position continually.[38]

Means of lighting the house.

Another article of furniture that was of great importance in the antique house was the lighting apparatus. (Figs. 40, 41, 42, and 43.) It is amazing on the one hand to see how simple and inadequate this was in ancient times, and on the other how much of art was lavished upon it. We should have thought that on account of the comparative darkness of their dwellings, the paucity of windows, and the rarity of glass-panes, the ancients would have taxed their inventive powers to discover some more ample and more artistic mode of lighting than could be obtained from a simple wick in the tube of an oil-lamp. A brighter light could only be produced by increasing the number of wicks and flames, or rather flamelets, for too large wicks would have smoked.

Lamps.

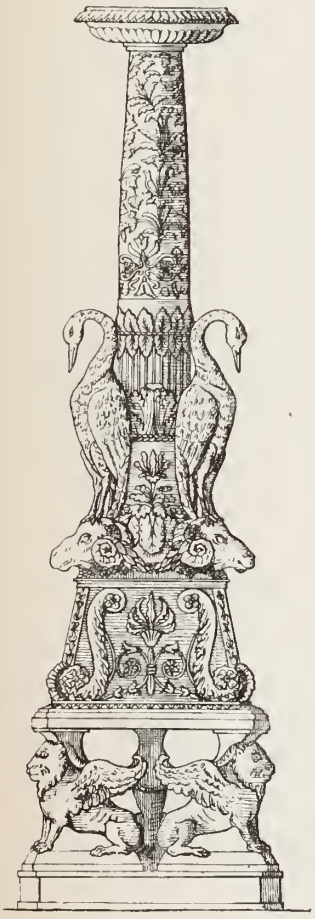
An immense number of small lamps in terra-cotta and bronze decorated in low relief or otherwise have been preserved to us. Almost all of these are arranged for a single wick, but some have two or more. Being low and flat, with the tube on one side and the handle on the other, they could be easily carried about, and stood firmly where they were placed. In order, however, to have light above the eyes, or in some particular part of the room, as, for instance, near the

[38] The chairs of the Branchidæ (at the British Museum) which stood on either side of the sacred way at Miletus, leading up to the temple of the Didymæan Apollo, are examples of the oldest kind of Greek chairs known. A similar and very ancient form is preserved to us in the *seated* terra-cotta figures of Gæa in the Museum of Berlin, of which we have an example in the Way collection belonging to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The square seat upon which the Jupiter of the Parthenon frieze is seated has a round bar for a back, resting on short hand-posts fitted into the seat. The arms are lower than the back, and are formed of slender bars framed into the uprights at the back, resting upon winged sphinxes. The Greeks made folding metal seats and arm-chairs. Among Roman chairs we may mention the *solium*, a chair of state with back and arms. The legs were finely shaped and carved, and it had a footstool or cushion (*scabellum*). The *cathedra*, a lounging-chair, soft-cushioned and long, was specially affected by women. The generic name of *sella* includes other seats, some with a semicircular back (*arcus*), others like our tabourets, without backs, and provided with movable cushions. Benches used at baths, or placed by the bedside, were called *scanna* and *subsellia*.

Candelabra.

couch upon which one wished to recline while reading, very elaborate candelabra with several lights were used, and these were placed sometimes on the table, and sometimes on the floor. In the poorer houses they were made of wood, in the richer of bronze and silver. Those intended for the table were lower and had a flat plate, often supported by a figure on the top of the shaft, to hold the lamp, or were so arranged that one or more lamps could be hung upon them. In this case the candlestick was often made to represent a tree with branches worked out in a more or less realistic manner. The chief peculiarity of the candelabrum which stood upon the floor was an exceedingly slender fluted shaft springing like a reed from a tripod-shaped pedestal, raised on the legs of animals; its supports and its capital, which frequently represented a conventionalized flower-cup, were made of exquisitely wrought bronze, with ornamental figures in relief, or else they were richly adorned with silver inlays, in a style which enhanced the beauty of the most splendid rooms. There was yet a third kind of candelabrum most frequently used in the antechambers and larger rooms, such as the atria and peristyles, and also in the open air. (Fig. 43.) These were of marble, and more massive in form from the nature of the material of which they were made. Their principal feature also was the shaft of a column, which was wreathed with vine-leaves, or ivy, or some other ornament. This shaft had a plate upon the top to hold the lamp, and was itself raised upon a tall pedestal in the form of a three-

Fig. 43.



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sided altar. Such candelabra, which are not uncommon in museums, might furnish us with admirable models for gas-fixtures and lamp-holders to be used in our halls and vestibules. Were we now to pass from the essential and peculiar features of antique furniture to the common utensils, such as those for the table, toilet-objects, etc., etc., we should find the same universal feeling for art pervading them, a feeling which did not allow anything to be neglected or overlooked which could contribute to the general effect of perfect artistic harmony. In the antique house, art governed everything, even to the minutest particular. But this did not last long. Even Pompeii, as we have seen, stood with its art and its system of decoration on the verge of a decadence which already showed itself in many things. Side by side with the slow dissolution of the Roman Empire the work of inevitable destruction went on, until at last, when art itself had already become barbarous, the successive invasions of barbarian hordes into the classic world extinguished its culture and its art so completely that the Middle Ages had to begin the work anew.

Table and toilet utensils.

Decadence.



CHAPTER II.

THE MEDIÆVAL HOUSE.



HEN, in following the historical course of our subject, we descend from ancient times to those of the Middle Ages, we rather retrograde than advance in this, as in most other matters of culture. The antique house made us acquainted with a peculiar but very perfect kind of dwelling, adorned with everything which could make it attractive, rich in all decorative refinements, and favored with all the advantages resulting from a many-sided and perfectly developed knowledge of technical processes, such as could only have been attained by a highly endowed people, after centuries of cumulative civilization, and which could not have been accomplished by any other than the most perfect taste, and the most earnest pursuit of the ideal in art.

Decay of civilization in Italy.

It was upon this antique civilization and art, which, according to the universal law of history, were doomed to decay,[1] that the ever-renewed flood of barbarian invasion[2] poured down

[1] "All things hasten to decay, all fall, all perish, all come to an end. Man dieth, iron consumeth, wood decayeth, towers crumble, strong walls fall down, the rose withereth away; the war-horse waxeth feeble, gay trappings grow old; all the works of man perish. Thus we are taught that all die, both clerk and lay; and short would be the fame of any after death, if their history did not endure by being written in the book of the clerk." — TAYLOR'S *Wace.*, p. 3.

[2] "At certain times," says Viollet-le-Duc, with more strength than elegance, "man needs the barbarian element, as the ground needs manure."

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until, at least upon the soil which we are now to tread, it utterly destroyed them.

We stand, therefore, at the commencement of a new epoch, at the beginning of a new style of art, which, owing to the low state of culture among the people, was unable to profit by the artistic bequest of the classic world.[3] We stand also on new ground, and in another climate, where the lower temperature, and the abundance of snow and rain, obliged man to construct and arrange his dwellings on a very different plan. While the Greeks and Romans were forced to construct their houses so as to protect themselves from the summer heat and the rays of the sun, and to make small windows, and use marble and stone for floors, so as to insure coolness, the inhabitant of the North looked upon the sun as his great source of comfort in life, and thought only how he could best shelter himself from inclement weather, storm, and the winter cold.

Northern and Southern house requirements contrasted.

There were, however, many other differences. We have seen how in Greek and Roman times the same general principle of division and arrangement prevailed in all dwelling-houses, amid all sorts of variations induced by the rank and wealth of the possessor, the configuration and condition of the site, or by artistic reasons. This is not the case on the northern side of the Alps, though it is true that there also the house developed from an underlying form. The essence of the Southern or of the antique house, as we explained in the preceding chapter, is that it is a house with courts: a court with walls, entirely or for the most part open above, is always its light-distributing centre, around which roofed chambers are distributed on all its four sides. The Northern house is

[3] The early Merovingian kings did, however, utilize much of what the Romans left behind them. They converted the Imperial villas into palaces, and adorned them with the rich furniture and precious stuffs of the Gallo-Roman period. During the wars and invasions which followed upon the death of Charlemagne, and the division of his ill-cemented empire (A. D. 843), these relics of the past for the most part disappeared. The description given by Sidonius Apollinarius of his villa at Auvergne might have been written of one at Baiæ or Tusculum. (*Letter to Domitius*, Lib. II. Ep. II. p. 374.) Roman construction and decoration prevailed in Gaul as late as the eleventh century.

constructed on a totally different plan, with a single closed and roofed room, the hall, which receives its light from the outside, and is the common abode of the family, the servants, and the domestic animals. Thus the Northern and the Southern house, the house of the hall and the house of the court, are in direct opposition. During the Middle Ages the house of the hall passed through many changes and took divers shapes, from causes which it is difficult to trace. The English house differed from the German, as did that by the sea from that on the mountain; so also the arrangement of the knight's castle or the prince's palace was other than that of the merchant or the burgher living in the city. In many neighborhoods we find that the Southern house has been transplanted to France and Germany, where, combining with Northern varieties, it has given rise to composite forms.

Difference in construction.

On account of this variety of kinds and mixture of shapes, the mediæval dwelling wants unity of plan, which in course of time entirely disappeared. With it unity of style was also lost, for there are two or rather three art-epochs or styles which we must pass in review, namely, the Romanesque, the Gothic, and, the earliest of all, that of the Merovingian and Carlovingian times. We need not lay much stress on the latter, partly because it is more important for our purpose to become acquainted with the higher and better stages of development than with one which remained imperfect or was transitional; partly because, in those early mediæval times to which it belonged, art played but a small part in the house. In comparison with antiquity, this is also relatively true of the Romanesque and early Gothic periods; for it is amazing how much splendor and color, by means of gold, jewels, and costly stuffs, were at that time lavished on personal adornment, on clothing, armor, and horse-trappings, and how little on house decoration. The mediæval mansion consequently left much to be desired both in the way of art and of comfort; but it is none the less important for us to consider it, not only because in many places it is regarded as the ideal house, but also because it is the starting-point of our present system, which

Want of unity in plan of Northern dwelling.

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took its peculiar form upon our (the German) soil, in our climate, and was suited to the same ideas of family life which we now have, though these were then in a little advanced state.

The variety of building-plans, to which I have alluded, is of little consequence to us, since we are chiefly concerned with internal arrangements. Nevertheless, the two things are so intimately connected that we cannot pass over the architectural development of the house, or the division and destination of its rooms. There are at least some indications, in the houses of those classes of society by whom art was at all considered, of the historical process of development. I have already pointed out that the Northern house proceeds out of the enclosed and roofed hall, as being itself the all-in-all of the house. This hall, despite all changes and additions, continued to be the common and essential dwelling-place of the highest class of society in the Middle Ages. It formed the central focus of knightly life, where the liege lord assembled his vassals, where he received their homage, and gave them feasts and revels. It was therefore necessary to the whole being and doing of the feudal noble. It rose in importance, it flourished with him, and with him also it sank into insignificance, and degenerated into a mere vestibule, or waiting-room for servants. Its relation to the rooms, that is to say, provided there were several rooms (for with the ordinary nobility, the simple knights, and country gentlemen, the hall for a long time constituted the whole of the dwelling, being the theatre of daily life, the lodging-place of the family and the menials by night), is the relation between society and the family. So long as the hall was in its glory, society had stronger claims upon man than family ties, and its decline signified their triumph and the triumph of domestic life.

The hall.

The noticeable differences in building-construction rest also upon the relation of the hall to the living-rooms. According to the old German requirements of grand feudal residences, every room which was designed for a special purpose formed a separate and independent building. The hall, which was

The living-rooms.

How treated.

conspicuous for size and splendor, was in the centre and raised upon several steps. At the side, but distinct from it, there was a room or building where the lady and her husband, the children and the female servants, lived and slept. These and other buildings, such as one for the male domestics (as the men-at-arms were lodged in the hall at night), one for the stable, and another for the kitchen, were surrounded by a ditch fortified with stakes, having a gate through which the road led straight to the hall entrance. The manor-houses of the Merovingian Franks, the imperial palaces of Charlemagne, and the "hams" of the Anglo-Saxons,[4] as we know them through pictures in old Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, which, with the help of chronicles, enable us to form a distinct idea of their appearance, were all of this character.

[4] The Anglo-Saxon "ham," i. e. the house of the head of a family, a name from which our word "hamlet," is derived, was coupled with his name, as Beormesham. It consisted of several wooden buildings enclosed by a mound, wall, or ditch, the largest of which was called the "heal," or hall. This was the family living-room, in which many of its members caroused by day and slept by night, either on sacks filled with straw laid on the floor, or on benches. These benches had chests below the seat, in which the sacks were kept when not in use. Its walls were covered with figured hangings called "wah-kraeyd," or "wah-rift," i. e. wall-clothing, dyed with purple and other colors, against which arms and suits of armor were sometimes hung. The fire was made in the middle of the hall, and the smoke escaped through a circular opening called a "louver." The furniture consisted chiefly of benches, chairs being used only by persons of high rank, and of a round or oblong table, or board placed on trestles, which was covered at meal-times with a tablecloth, "bord-clath." Like the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons occupied only one side of the table at meals, leaving the other side free, so that the servants could perform their duties without inconvenience to the guests. This was also the case in France in the eleventh century, as a scene in the Bayeux tapestry shows us, and in the thirteenth. Thus Christ and his disciples are seated at a semicircular table with squared ends, in a representation of the Last Supper which occurs in a MS. *Livre d'Evangiles* of that period, from St. Martial de Limoges. (See *Peintures et Ornements des MSS.*, by Count Bastard.) Anglo-Saxon dames occupied small rooms or detached buildings called "bur" (bower), which, like others used by the family dependants, formed a part of the "ham." The main building had sometimes a second story called "up-flor." With its dependencies, such as stables, sheep-cotes, granges, etc., it was a sort of private village, resembling the villages of ancient Germany and Gaul.

That it was always a wooden construction, is shown by the fact that the only Anglo-Saxon words for building are "timbrian," "atimbrian," "getimbrian," i. e. to make of timber. (See Th. Wright's *Houses of Other Days: a History of Domestic Manners, etc., in England.*)

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Architectural and social progress.

The next stage of development indicated an advance in architecture, as well as in general culture and social life. It placed the outlying buildings, and especially the house of the women, in connection with the hall, and thus brought woman into the society of men, — a society of which she was to be the vivifying and humanizing centre in the approaching period of chivalry. The Anglo-Saxon drinking-hall, called "horned" in the Saga of Beowulf, that is to say, having its gable decorated with antlers, knew no social gatherings but the banquets and feasts of men. (Fig. 44.)

The buildings of the "ham" were now connected with each other in two ways. Sometimes all the outbuildings upon the

Fig. 44.



same level were joined to the sides of the hall, so that the women's apartment, called "camera," "chambre," "kammer," or "zimmer," to distinguish it from the hall, was on one side, while the stable or the kitchen was on the other; for, as food was generally cooked at the fireplace in the hall, a separate kitchen was only necessary in very fine houses. The doors and windows of the women's apartment opened into the hall, so that the lady of the house knew and could take part in all that went on there. When these three or four different

apartments, which we have described, were united under one roof, — as it had not been really necessary in primitive times that they should be, — the house was architecturally complete. In the second arrangement, by which the building was made a unit, the women's apartments were over the hall, and thus it became a house of more than one story. Originally, the connection with the hall was only external, by means of a staircase built outside the walls;[5] but afterwards it was effected by an inner staircase, which, in the warlike times that followed, was usually constructed in the thickness of the wall.

Fig. 45.



Internal staircase.

The development, perhaps also the original idea, of this second method of building is due to the influence of the Normans, who are especially known in the history of art as bold and skilful architects.[6] Wherever they made their raids and invasions, wherever they settled as conquerors, they were obliged to construct strongholds, both to keep the vanquished in subjection, and to form a base for future operations. The

[5] The banqueting-scene represented in the Bayeux tapestry (Fig. 45) takes place in an upper apartment, which is only accessible by means of an external flight of steps. The lower room is vaulted, and divided into three compartments, like the aisles of a church, an arrangement not unusual in Saxon and Norman buildings of the eleventh century. (See the *Bayeux Tapestry elucidated by I. C. Bruce*, p. 36.)

[6] The Normans were essentially a building race, and spent a great deal upon their mansions, though they were sober in their manner of living; the Saxons, on the contrary, were indifferent as to how they were lodged, caring only for eating and drinking, in which, says William of Malmesbury, they consumed entire nights as well as days. Unlike the Normans and French, who lived frugally in noble and splendid mansions, the Saxons consumed their whole substance in mean and despicable houses. While the Saxons used wood as a building-material, the

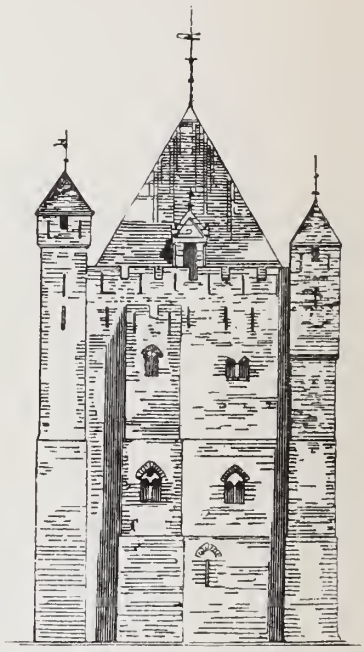
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The house a fortress.

house and court of the great feudal lords now became a fortress, which served in times of danger as a place of refuge for the whole body of their vassals, to whom its defence was intrusted. This second system of building was adopted as a basis of construction, because it reduced the space to be defended to a minimum. The hall and the living-rooms situated above it were transformed into a colossal tower called the donjon,[7] with walls of extraordinary thickness, three, and in later times four, stories high. (Fig. 46.) Each story consisted of a single room, and the use to which the stories were put was changed. The hall was transferred to the first story, but was still accessible from without by means of an external flight of steps which could be removed in time of siege or danger, while the ground-floor,

The donjon.

Fig. 46.



Normans were builders of stone walls and towers. After the Conquest they introduced a more solid and spacious style of residences, with "parloirs," or talking-rooms, on the ground-floor, and upper stories containing chambers for the use of ladies. The house of a landowner in England was called a "manoir" (derived from *maneo*), or manor. Pollen (*Ancient and Modern Furniture*, Int., p. xlix) mentions a Norman house at Milichope (plan and elevation given by Wright, p. 59) of two stories, with only one chamber below and a circular exterior staircase. This house, which is of the twelfth century, has very thick stone walls and an upper story larger than the lower, probably divided by wooden partitions. The only new articles of furniture introduced by the Normans were "armaria," or cupboards, either built into the wall recess, or "complete wooden enclosures." In monasteries the small halls which contained cupboards to hold religious books were also called "armaria." Norman beds had ornamental testers, and were furnished with quilts, pillows, spotted or striped linen sheets, and a covering of badger, beaver, or marten skins. Clothes were hung on a pole projecting from the wall, and benches were placed at the foot of the bed.

[7] The donjon tower rose high above the rest of the building, and commanded a wide view over the surrounding country. In old French the word "dongier,"

used as a store-room, was accessible only from above. The vassals lived and slept in the hall, in whose thick walls, close to the loopholes, niches and corridors to contain their beds were constructed. The family lived in the second story, the children and the women-servants in the third, where all female occupations were carried on.[8]

Changes made during the twelfth century.

Such was the general plan of a Norman baron's castle; but in the course of the twelfth century, owing to the development of the Romanesque style of architecture, as well as to the greater luxury of knightly life, the interior at least was much more richly ordered. Windows, not only beautiful, but often coupled and arched, replaced the loopholes, and, besides other interior changes, arches supported the widened roof. The first story was inhabited by the retainers; while the hall, being the state apartment and the place where the feudal lord received his vassals and gave banquets, was removed to the second story, and adorned with all possible splendor. The third and fourth stories continued to be occupied by the family; but in consequence of the keener sense of propriety of the time, and to meet the increased demands upon hospitality, they were divided into several rooms. The hall, however, and the living-rooms in their separation and their destination continued to be the main features of the house. They were so still, even in the Gothic period, when the armed retainers were lodged in an adjoining building, and the donjon, with its walls reduced in thickness, had become a real palace. Both, together with the stables, were enclosed by a

or "doingier," means domination, power. (Viollet-le-Duc, *Dict. de l'Arch.*, Vol. V. note 2, p. 34.) The donjon belonged essentially to the feudal system. It was distinguished from a common tower in that it not only commanded the defences of the castle, but also the approaches to it, and also in that it had a private door opening upon the country. It is said that the first donjons were built by the Normans after they had definitely established themselves on the Continent.

[8] Norman fortresses were built on elevated mounds and surrounded by a "fosse," or ditch, and an outer fortification, or "bailey." The interior building was the "keep." The outside of the stone walls of Norman castles, as, for instance, those of Guildford and Tintagel, are pierced with square holes at regular distances, into which the bond pieces fitted, by which the wooden frames were held together which seemed to brace the walls. (Bruce, op. cit. p. 65.)

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battlemented wall, and with them constituted the castle. Not until the feudal splendor of the barons had died out, and the king's court had drawn the whole nobility to itself, and had absorbed all petty courts within itself, did the hall lose its architectural, political, and social importance.

Internal disposition of German houses.

The development of the castle was essentially the same in Germany as in other parts of Europe, but the internal disposition of the rooms was different. The hall (called by the Germans "Saal" or "Pallas"), where princes assembled and knights kept company together, here also dominated all other parts of the edifice; but the more princely the castle, so much the more widely were its parts spread out, although partially covered by a single roof. Only the lack of building-space on the tops of isolated rocks, or the poverty of the feudal lords, could reconcile them to donjon-like tower-castles, which, however, in Germany, did not equal those of the English or French nobles in size, and belong throughout to a later period than that of which we are speaking. As these castles were built as necessity dictated, rather than according to any architectural principle, their internal arrangements were of the most wretched kind. The one large room built over the stables and store-rooms served as a hall and living-room for the family, where cooking, eating, and drinking were carried on, and guests were accommodated. This was not the case in a prince's castle, of which we have an admirable and tolerably well-preserved example in the Wartburg, the residence of the Thuringian landgraves, built in the Romanesque style, that is to say, during the palmy days of chivalry. The main part of such a building, which rose above the rest of the edifice, contained, first of all, a noble hall, situated either on the first story, or more commonly, at least in early times, on the ground-floor, in which case, as we learn from poetical descriptions, it was reached by a massive flight of steps, at the top of which distinguished guests were received by the master of the mansion. The family and guest rooms were over the hall or next to it, although the latter were sometimes in detached buildings, of which a number were generally to be found within the

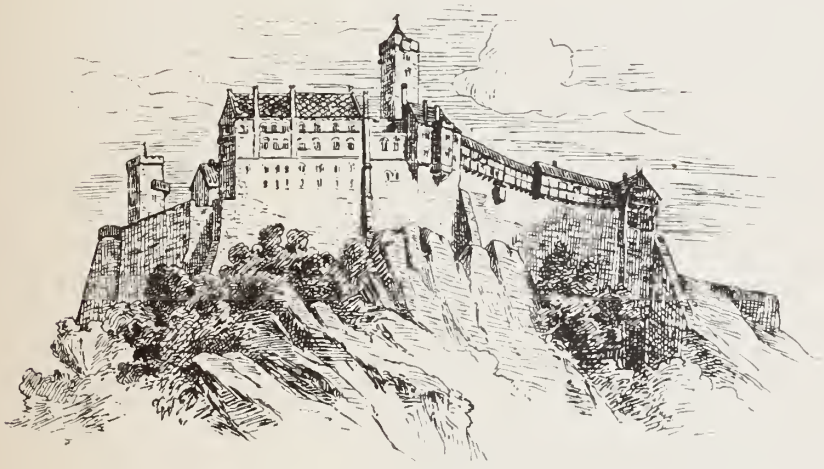
Plan of princely castles.





walls, for military as well as for civil purposes. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when minstrels' contests, great tournaments, and poetical festivals were held, and attended not only by knights and ladies, but by bards, poets, players, and travelling artists of every description, a princely seat like the Wartburg (Fig. 47 and Plate IX., A) had to be prepared for the

Fig. 47.



reception of hundreds of guests, although their accommodation for the night necessarily left much to be desired. There was, however, no guiding principle in the arrangement of its numerous rooms. That was determined, for the most part, by the configuration of the rocky site, intentionally selected on account of its adaptability for defence.

Town-houses.

It is even less easy to discover any system of construction in town-houses, where, moreover, the hall for the most part lost its importance. Here, until the later centuries of the Middle Ages, convenience and sociability were less considered than the demands of the owner's trade or calling, and construction was also influenced by the narrowness of the space within the city walls, which necessitated the building of houses with many stories. Business had to be transacted on the street in the front of the house. Here were the open workshops, which could be looked into from the street; here were the shops of

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the small traders, and the warehouses of the great merchants, which often, as can still be seen in North German commercial towns, occupied nearly the whole of the house, so that the dwelling and living rooms were crowded into the rear, or pushed up so high that they stuck like swallow's-nests in the eaves. There was no place either for social life or for art. All the guilds, as well as the patricians and the well-born, were banded together in political and social organizations, and performed the duties and enjoyed the pleasures of hospitality in taverns or in lordly drinking-halls. The town-house of the burgher first acquired social and artistic importance in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[9] The cities had then become powerful and important, the citizens wealthy, and the patricians, more affluent than the landed gentry, fancied themselves their equals, and desired to imitate their knightly style of living. In town-houses those rooms not exclusively devoted to trade, which were used as places for general intercourse with the world, and especially for social purposes, were separated from those in which the family lived. The patricians built stately, palatial mansions for themselves, such as may still be seen in old Imperial towns; houses with spacious halls and wide-spread living-rooms, which were far more richly furnished and commodiously arranged than those of feudal castles ever could have been.

Life in a castle not desirable.

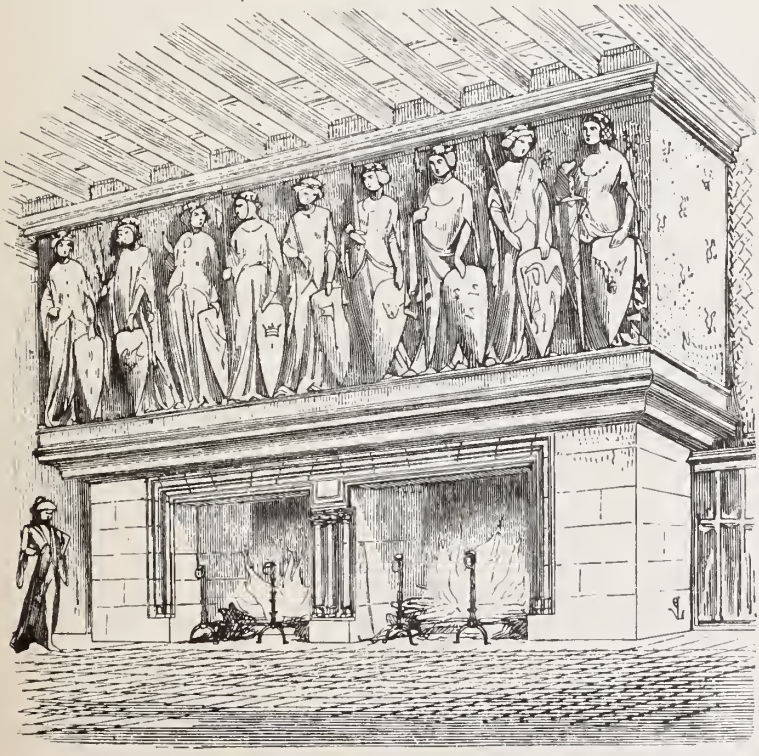
The truth is, that despite the showy effect of the knight's retinue, of his feasts and banquets, and the richly adorned apparel of lords, ladies, and attendants; despite the spacious halls and colossal edifices, built in an elaborate, nay, even florid architectural style, in which he and his peers lived, we are forced to conclude that life in a castle, whether small or

[9] Batissier (op. cit. p. 646) cites the following description of the house of a French lawyer at Rouen in the fourteenth century. It was a two-story house without any outbuildings. The ground-floor was divided into the "parlouer," or talking-room, the dining-room, and the kitchen; the first floor, into the master's study, the clerk's room, and the waiting-room for clients. The sleeping-rooms were situated in the second story. The walls and floors were covered with straw mattings, and the rooms were furnished with benches and chairs of walnut.

great, was nothing less than deplorable; that its arrangement made it barely habitable; and that its ornamental furniture was not especially artistic. I will not speak of the halls of the Anglo-Saxons or of other contemporary Germanic tribes, where heroes slept upon the same benches which they had previously used as tables for eating and drinking, and in which, during cold weather, they gathered around a fire kindled upon a hearth in the middle of the hall, whose smoke, for want of a chimney,[10] filled the room until it made its escape through

[10] Chimneys are mediæval inventions. "A discovery of which Vitruvius had not a glimpse," says Hallam (*Middle Ages*, Vol. II. p. 267), "was made perhaps in this country (England) by some forgotten semi-barbarian." In France, chimneys are said to have been built as early as the eleventh or twelfth century. Less wide than those of a hundred years later, they were generally built in the front wall between two windows. (See Viollet-le-Duc, op. cit. Vol. III.) Richly sculptured chimneys first appear in the fourteenth century. In palaces and great castles they were covered with bas-reliefs and enriched with figures in the round.

Fig. 48.



CHAP. II.

Articles of furniture.

accidental holes in the roof, through the narrow windows, or the door. The gold-embroidered tapestries, usually Byzantine or Italian (Plate X.), which hung upon the walls, a clumsy gilded chair of state for the feudal lord, and a few gold and silver utensils, either plundered or of native workmanship, were in fact all that gave a little show of splendor to such halls, excepting the wearing-apparel, which, in reference to the way in which it had been obtained, was called booty. Here and there, particularly in royal residences, were to be found single pieces of antique furniture, such as a gilded bronze seat of late Roman times like a camp-stool, with arms ending in lion's heads, used as a throne [11] (see tail-piece), or an elaborately

Those in the Ducal Palace at Urbino are among the most beautiful examples of Italian chimney-pieces of the fifteenth century. They were sculptured by a certain Ambrogio da Milano about 1450. The great chimney-place in the palace of the Counts of Poitiers, which has three fireplaces, a flight of ten steps leading from the floor to the level of the hearth, and an elaborately sculptured entablature, is the finest example of its kind in France, and one of the finest in the world. It dates from the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Mention is made of chimneys in England and Italy in the fourteenth century, and they are found in several English castles which bear a much older date. Before their introduction people used braziers in small houses, and hypocausts — a sort of furnace used in the Roman baths — in those of larger dimensions. (Battissier, op. cit. p. 644.) This method was adopted in some monastic establishments of the ninth century in France. (See the plan of the Abbaye de St. Gall, built about A. D. 820, in Viollet-le-Duc's *Dict. de l'Arch.*, Vol. I. p. 243, and Vol. III. p. 194.)

[11] The famous chair of King Dagobert (see tail-piece), formerly preserved in the Abbey of St. Denis and now in the Louvre, which is of this kind, has been supposed by some modern archæologists to be an antique curule chair to which back and arms were added in the tenth century. According to a tradition which dates back to the twelfth century, it was, however, made by St. Eloy or Eligius, goldsmith and marker of the mint, to Clothaire II., Dagobert I., and Clovis II., and Bishop of Noyon, who died at Soissons, A. D. 659. The upper portion of the arms was added by Suger, Abbot of St. Denis, Prime Minister to Louis VII. during the first half of the twelfth century. It is of bronze, and has been gilded. The seat, which was made to fold together, is formed of two tiger-headed legs facing sideways, with claw feet. A pair of diagonal bars connect the two legs at the back, which are of the same form as those in front. The two arms are fastened to the seat by interlaced loops with a bar through. The back is shaped like a low gable, supported by two segments of circles which meet with a cusp in the middle. For a description of the chair see Pollen, op. cit. pp. 86, et seq. An account of St. Eloy and his works may be found in the *Histoire des Arts* of the *Bibliophile Jacob*, pp. 193, et seq. In the Bayeux tapestry Edward the Confessor is seated upon a chair like that of

wrought silver table, or drinking-vessels of silver and gold. But all these things were valued rather for their material than their workmanship, and were either isolated or accidentally associated with other objects in rooms whose hap-hazard decoration showed neither method nor sense of fitness. In the utterly crude and elementary state of art, and the universal lack of skill and intelligence, harmonious completeness could not be looked for.

The Romanesque style.

A great advance was made some centuries later, when the Romanesque style, whose distinguishing characteristic was a rich, lively, and fantastic ornamentation, came into vogue. The Crusades had made many of the nobles and princes acquainted with the glories of Arabo-Saracenic art, and when they had once learned to appreciate the magnificence of Oriental palaces, and the splendor of costly raiment, armor, and furniture, they could no longer be contented with their desolate rooms, cold walls, and rude household stuff.[12] The

Dagobert, as is Herod in a French MS. of the thirteenth century, from St. Martial de Limoges, of which a fac-simile is given by the Comte de Bastard in his magnificent work entitled *Peintures et Ornements des MSS.*, of the two first volumes of which the Astor Library has a copy. It is from such sources that we derive our imperfect knowledge of furniture in the Middle Ages, as little or none is in existence. Up to the fifteenth century we depend chiefly upon MSS. and bas-reliefs for our ideas about the forms and shapes generally in use; and as it was not until artists had begun to master perspective that they often ventured to represent interiors, and when they did, did so in a very imperfect manner, these are not so serviceable as might at first sight be anticipated. Few pieces of furniture are given in MSS. from the tenth to the middle of the fourteenth century, and these are generally painted on a gold or mosaic background in flat tints.

[12] The influence of the East upon the West is to be traced in furniture, as it is in all forms of art, long before the Crusades, though it is unquestionable that the knights who followed Robert Guiscard and Bohemond and Peter the Hermit to the Holy Land, and those who, having previously become familiar with Eastern luxury at the court of Alexis Commenus, shared with Baldwin the glory of taking possession of Constantinople, returned home with a taste for splendor which had a great influence upon their surroundings. The rich presents which were sent from Byzantium to Charlemagne, and the Greek workmen whom he employed at Aix-la-Chapelle, sufficiently account for the Byzantine style of industrial products of all kinds in the ninth century. Like the Merovingians, the Carlovingians obtained all their rich furniture and precious stuffs from the East. Silks made at Byzantium, Athens, Thebes, and Corinth were articles of traffic between the Christians, who undertook pilgrimages to Jerusalem, and the Arabs, who, while going to pay their devotions at the shrine of the Prophet, had also the

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Influence of Oriental products upon Europe.

Genoese, the Venetians, and the merchants of other maritime cities brought genuine Oriental products within their reach. (Plate X., A.) They could not, however, import the warm climate and the sunny skies, and so it happened that, despite the progress made, and the newly awakened pleasure taken in furnishing the house more richly and more artistically, perfection was by no means attained. No real comfort was thus brought into the household, and endless are the complaints of the poets about the roughness and hardness of winter, which kills all pleasure and imprisons men within chill, dark, desolate walls. We can sympathize with them when we know what castles and their arrangements were, and can understand how all hearts rejoiced when May came, to set prisoners free, to bring warmth and sunshine into the house, and joy to the soul of man.

The castle of our imaginations and the real castle contrasted.

One of the chief sources of household discomfort was the imperfect method of closing the window apertures, which caused a constant draft of air, doubly felt in castles situated upon high-lying ground, where they were unprotected from the winds. We picture to our minds these knightly halls and the charming private apartments of the ladies, as we see them now in restored castles, or modern castellated dwellings, with deep bay-windows filled with painted glass through which a poetical, colored, twilight-like, and subdued light penetrated into the apartment. But the fact is, that such halls and cham-

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advancement of their commercial interests in view. Many pilgrims to holy places in the East, as is well pointed out by M. Viollet-le-Duc, had other than the satisfaction of their religious instincts in view; and the relations which they kept up with the East undoubtedly influenced Western industry, which had been almost altogether destroyed after the expulsion of the Romans and the fall of the Roman Empire. "If, then," he adds, "we would form an idea of the furniture of the nobles in Gaul, Britain, and Germany, we must seek its types, manner of workmanship, and brute materials in the East."[1] From the eleventh century, Venice became the centre of commerce between the Orient and Occident. "During the first period of the Middle Ages, Venice was a great crucible, in which the arts of Roman antiquity, the arts of the East, and some barbarian industries were melted down to form the models of everything which belonged to furniture, utensils, clothing, and arms adopted by the Occidentals."

[1] *Dict. du Mobilier Français*, Vol. I. p. 420.



A. SASSANIDE SILK TAPESTRY.
4th or 5th Century.



B. ITALIAN TAPESTRY, SILK AND GOLD.
13th Century.

bers were very exceptionally to be met with before the fifteenth century; that is to say, they were rare through the feudal period, and up to the beginning of modern times. In great churches, of course, and in the wealthier religious houses, windows were always glazed; but not, extraordinary as it may appear, in castles and private dwellings.[13] Even poets, who sometimes decorate the apartments of royal princesses with glazed windows, mention them as an extraordinary thing. Frequently the only appliances provided for closing the window apertures were shutters of wood, and these, when not open, excluded both light and air. In all the better class of dwellings, however, the wooden shutters were, as a rule, combined with some semi-transparent material, which filled a part of the window, while the rest was closed by the shutters, or served as an inner casement, outside of which were the shutters. This material was generally fine waxed linen, or oiled paper, or shaved horn, such as is even now used for stable lanterns, but in very rare cases it was transparent mica, which, like the horn, was set in small pieces in a latticed window.[14] These means of closing the window were by far the most common as late as the fourteenth century, even in the wealthier German city houses, which greatly surpassed the castles in material comfort. Not until the fifteenth century did glass for windows first become in so far common, at least in Ger-

Use of glass for windows.

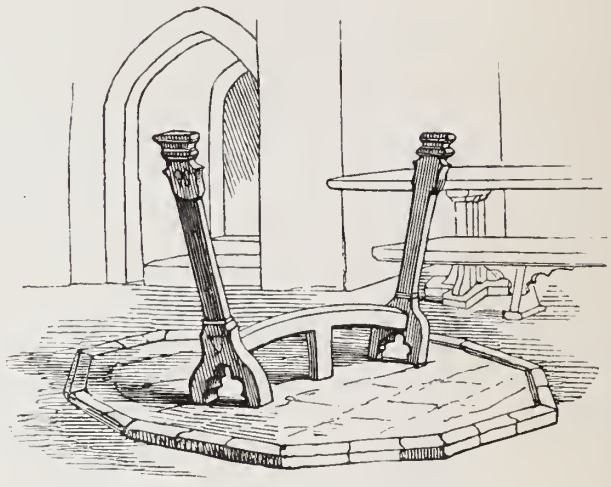
[13] Glass was all but unknown in England in the twelfth century. In Shaw's *Specimens of Ancient Furniture*, extracts are given from registers of 1239, 1248, and 1252 relating to stained-glass windows. Windows of white glass are ordered to be made, and to be painted with the history of Lazarus and Dives. An extract is also given from the *Romance of Arthur of Lyttle Brytayne*, to the following effect: "Herewith he awoke and opened his eyen, and beheld the grete wyndowes open before hym, fayre glazed, and the sonne shynynge all about the chambre."

Glass is said not to have been made in England until about 1439.

[14] In the *Menagier de Paris*, written in 1393, the author speaks of chambers whose windows are to be closed with oil-cloth, or parchment, or similar substances. Viollet-le-Duc, who quotes this passage (op. cit. Vol. I. p. 408), points out that as window-glass had then long been in use in France, such pieces of parchment, oiled-paper, etc., were probably applied to the shutters, parts of which were cut through. This precaution was so much the more useful to keep out the cold, the sun, and the flies, as house window-glass then consisted of little circular pieces of glass set in lead, called "boudines."

many, that (as, for example, in the year 1470, at Nuremberg) the houses of civil officers and servants were completely supplied with it; while it was still wanting in many of the rooms of the Imperial castle, which was uninhabited and therefore neglected. We may, however, accept it as a fact, that about this time, at the close of the Middle Ages, all the houses of the better and more affluent classes, excepting in some countries, as well as all the castles whose inhabitants were not absolutely ruined and degraded in rank, had windows of glass. This was in many instances stained and adorned with paintings, though usually it consisted merely of small round panes set in lead.

Fig. 49.



Under these circumstances it would have been especially desirable that the house should be thoroughly heated. Chimneys had been in use ever since the twelfth century, and ladies' apartments were always provided with them. (Plates IX., B and XI., A.) The fireplace, with its carved or colored mantel and cornice, often contributed materially to the beauty of the room, for the fire cast a cheerful, changeful light around it, and embellished every object with its blaze, but in most cases the heat which it gave out was wholly insufficient. This was particularly the case in spacious halls, where we often find more than one immense chimney-piece projecting far into the room. Many great halls of castle-like country-seats, however, even as late as the sixteenth century, have only an open brick fireplace in the centre of the room, furnished with a strong iron fire-dog, upon

Insufficient mode of heating.



A [illegible]



B [illegible] WARDROBE [illegible]

which the great logs of wood were laid. (Fig. 49.) It is evident that but little heat was diffused through these great halls; for we read in old stories how every guest and every wayfarer was at once led to the fire, and we see in pictures of interiors that the people sit as near as possible to the fireplace, which always had a sofa-like bench before it. In poorer dwellings, where the courtesies of knightly rank were less considered, it was customary to sit barefooted before the fireplace or the hearth fire.

Artistic appearance of the castle exaggerated by the poets.

If the arrangements for material comfort in the castle appear to us so insufficient, still less does its artistic character correspond with the fanciful descriptions of the poets, or harmonize with the rich development of Romanesque and Gothic architecture in the Middle Ages, and the highly rated splendors of the days of chivalry. Frequent representations show us even in later times, and not only in poor dwellings by any means, that the naked masonry of the wall was often not even covered with a coating of mortar, or made agreeable by a wash of color. Nevertheless, ornamental and figure painting found their place, together with tapestry-hangings and wooden wainscotings; and an effort was made to fashion artistic furniture in the prevalent style of the time, so as to bring it into harmony with the architecture. In general we may say of the perfected art of the Middle Ages, that in its application to household furniture it always followed correct fundamental principles, and that only in the later Gothic did it degenerate into overloadings and extravagances.

Mode of covering the walls.

Mural painting.

This observance of correct principles shows itself especially also in mural painting, which was naturally most frequently made use of as a means of decoration in churches and public buildings, where its effect was heightened and enhanced by brilliantly colored glass windows, though it was by no means unknown in castle halls and private residences. It is true that mediæval painting was much less perfect than that of the ensuing art period, being faulty in the drawing of the human figure, in the modelling of forms, and in the treatment of light and shade, as well as wanting in power of expression, emotion,

and character. In all these respects it stood on a low level, even up to the beginning of the fifteenth century. But for the current species of wall decoration a perfect art was not required. Not great artists, but skilled, well-instructed artisans, were needed to work according to thoroughly tested and sound traditional principles. They were met by a strong and healthy feeling for color in the public, which loved to apply it even to sculptured forms, and in the earlier centuries, both before and during the Romanesque period, also liked party-colored wood-work in furniture, until, in the later Gothic period, this kind of decoration was superseded by elaborate carved work.

General tone of color.

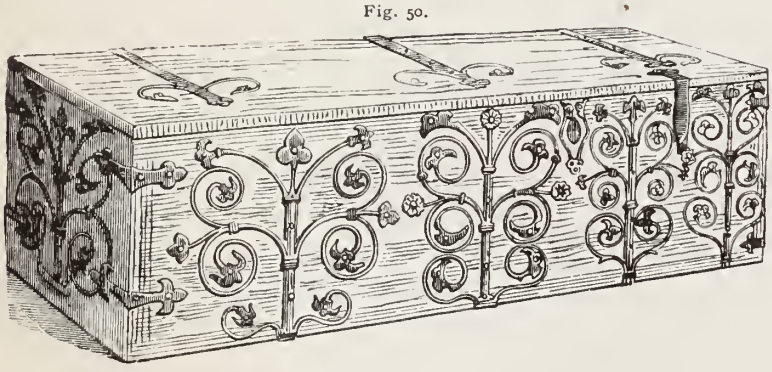
As yellow and brown, with black and white tones, predominated in ornamental and in figured wall-painting before the twelfth century, the general effect was monotonous and dark. But at this time a marked change occurred, induced, apparently, both by what men had seen in the color-loving East and by the development of glass-painting, in the presence of whose brilliant effects of color, as seen chiefly in churches, a dull or even a low scale of color was out of the question. To bring mural decoration up to the same high level of tone, gold was used as a medium, and this in turn necessitated the employment of the brightest hues, especially of blue. Thus the richest possible decoration was reached, especially in roofs and ceilings. Designs affected the flowing leafy arabesques of the Romanesque style, or followed the flat patterns of textile fabrics for the most part imported from the East, which were afterwards much modified throughout Christendom by the introduction of symbolic animals and other Christian subjects. Such paintings perfectly answered their object of doing away with the cold vacancy of the wall; and, in the absence of any other decoration, enlivened it to the eye in a simple and agreeable manner. Innumerable patterns of this description were invented during the Middle Ages, which still recommend themselves to study and imitation by their fitness and beauty.

Excellence of mediæval designs.

Figure-subjects were less common in living-rooms, not only

because artists capable of executing them were few in number, but also because the tall beds and chests (Fig. 50) in vogue, and in later times the wooden wainscoting, left little space for them to occupy. Where such subjects are represented, they generally form a frieze around the upper part of the wall, the lower part of which is covered with painted ornament, hangings, or wainscoting. The frieze often contains two rows of figures, one above the other, and these, being separated into groups by an arcade-like framework, form so many independent pictures. Their subjects are generally taken from that cycle of legends which inspired the epic poems of chivalry;

Fig. 50.



as, for example, those from the story of Tristan and Isolde, which the wealthy Nicholas Vintler caused to be painted upon the walls of the castle of Runkelstein in the Tyrol; or they represent allegorical scenes, which were especially in favor in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; or scenes in the lives of the upper ranks of society, such as games and festivals of a genre-like character. Defective in drawing as they are, owing to the then imperfect state of art, these paintings, though treated flatly without perspective, and containing figures colored like those in illuminated manuscripts, perfectly fulfil their decorative purpose.[15]

[15] Little is known of the decoration of rooms in England before the middle of the thirteenth century, when mural painting took the place of such needlework as the Bayeux tapestry.

Strutt (Int., p. 3, op. cit.) quotes a pas-

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As has been before said, the ceilings of rooms were painted, whether they were vaulted or of wooden construction. In either case such decoration was for the most part purely ornamental; but the ceilings of Romanesque churches, so long as they continued to be of wood and flat, were adorned with the whole series of subjects taken from Christian symbolism. In private dwellings flat wooden ceilings were far more common than vaulted roofs, with which cells and refectories of convents, as well as halls and other public buildings, were covered during the most flourishing period of the Gothic style. They were colored so as to show their construction, prominence being given to their ribs by a peculiar style of ornament, and by the filling up of the intervening spaces with leafy arabesques. The ceiling was often painted in imitation of the starry heavens, with gold stars upon a blue ground,[16] — a style of decora-

sage from the *Romance of Arthur of Lyttle Brytayne*, which, though evidently somewhat imaginary, gives an idea of the richly decorated apartments in the castles of the nobles. "Out of this hall, he entered into a chamber, the most rychest that ever was seen, for syth God first made mankynde, there was no manner of hystorie nor bataile but in that chamber it was portrayed with gold and azure and other fresh colours as quyckely adorned that it was wonder to behold."

In the time of Henry III. (1250) the walls of bedchambers, as well as those of sitting-rooms, were adorned with paintings.

In the *Dreme* of Chaucer (V. 1252) we read of

> "A chamber paint,
> Full of stories old and divers";

and in an old lay of the thirteenth century (*Sir Guinivere*) that

> "Her prison room was fair; from roof to floor
> With golden imageries pictured o'er, ...
> Illuminating throughout the sumptuous wall."

The Italian chronicler, Giovanni Fiamma, tells us that in 1334 Duke Azzo Visconti enlarged and embellished his palace at Milan. The walls of the great hall were decorated with paintings representing Vain Glory surrounded by the most illustrious heroes and princes, such as Æneas, Hector, Attila, Hercules, Charlemagne, and Azzo Visconti. "All these figures," says Fiamma, "were formed of gold, blue, and of enamels, and were of such beauty and such masterly technics, that it would be difficult to find their superiors in the world. (See *Giuglini Memorie della Citta e Campagna di Milano*, Vol. V. p. 237.) These mural paintings have been attributed to Giotto, who was certainly at Milan about this time, but, as he died in 1336, and was much occupied at Florence during the latter part of his life, it seems more than doubtful if he painted them.

From Padua to Naples, every part of Italy claims the presence of this great artist.

[16] This style of decoration, which was received in England in the thirteenth century, is of Egyptian origin. The ceilings of temples were generally so painted in ancient Egypt. A ceiling "studded with stars" is mentioned in the *Romance of*

tion which strikingly contrasted with the painted-glass windows, and which from churches found its way to private dwellings. So long as the old hall was an independent building, the bare roof-beams formed its ceiling; but when a loft or upper story was built over it, its floor became the ceiling of the room below it, so that when seen from below the disposition of the beams was visible, with the coffers formed by their intersections. If there was no upper story to the hall, its beams, which were decorated with colored ornament, served as its roof up to a late period; but sometimes a false ceiling, simulating a vaulted roof, was constructed of beams and boards between the roof and the hall. That of the great Town Hall at Nuremberg, which belongs to the sixteenth century, is an example of such a construction.

Where the wood-work of the roof was not absolutely unadorned, so that it owed its effect only to its peculiar tone, which grew darker and more sombre with time, colored decoration, at least in the earlier period of the Middle Ages, was more common than plastic, which belonged rather to the Gothic style. In general, and the exceptions are very few, the decoration of the ceiling was purely ornamental, and was applied to the architectural members and flat spaces, defined by the laying of the beams. Later, we find the under side of the roof covered over with planks whose points of junction are concealed by thin strips of wood. In such a case the arabesque-like ornament either follows the lay of the planks, or the whole ceiling is regarded as a flat surface, and decorated accordingly. The ceiling of the Imperial hall of the castle of Nuremberg, which was thus constructed in the fourteenth century, has an immense yellow eagle on a black ground in its centre, while the remaining space is decorated with arabesques

Decoration of ceilings, ornamental.

Arthur. The ground of these English ceilings, unlike the Egyptian, which was always blue, seems to have been generally green. Thus Henry III. gives directions to the Viscount of Southampton, "Quod cameram apud Winton colorari faciat viridi colore et stellari auro," and also to the sheriff of Hampshire to have the chamber at Winchester "coloured with a green colour and starred with gold." In these cases both walls and ceilings must have been painted alike.

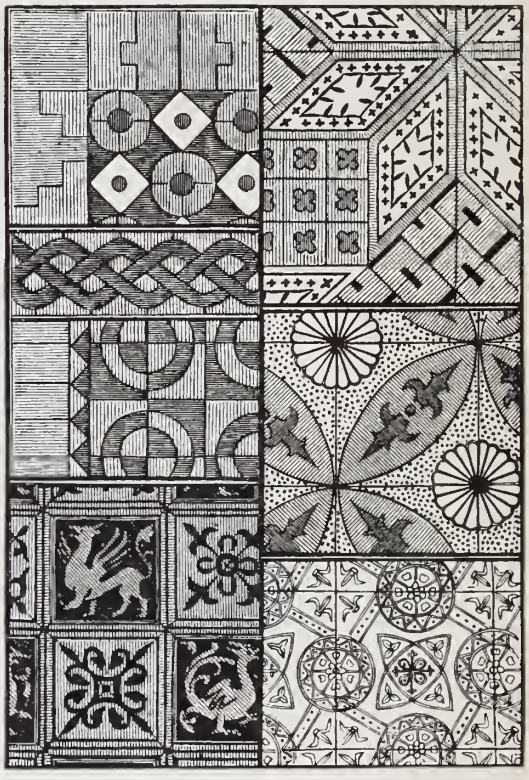
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which follow the course of the boards along their junction lines.

Carved ceilings.

The carved ornamentation of the wooden ceiling began with the simple shaping of the faces of the beams, so as to take away from the rude effect of the carpenter's work, or the adorning of these faces with lightly carved leaf-ornament. Carving was chiefly expended, however, on the supports and consoles, upon which the heads of the beams rested. These were often richly and variously shaped, sometimes into figures, as of angels, or shield-bearers, both being painted in fitting colors. The Gothic style, as is well known, carried out this kind of roofing in a very artistic manner, and handed it down to the sixteenth century, which essentially modified it, and introduced figure-painting with it.

Fig. 51.



Treatment of floors.

In the mediæval house the floor, as compared with the ceiling, was very insignificantly, or at least very rarely artistically, decorated. The ordinary kind of floor in the lower story was made of pounded mortar, polished as much as possible, and was covered with straw in winter to protect the feet from cold, and with freshly cut grass or leaves in summer for the sake of coolness. In the spring-time flowers — especially roses — were scattered upon it, and on festal occasions the

same fragrant ornaments were hung upon the walls. Pavements, more especially in halls, were sometimes made of stone slabs of divers shades of color, arranged checker-wise. In any case the patterns were very simple, making no pretension to compete with those of the elaborately composed mosaic pavements of antiquity. Stone slabs were, however, less commonly used for pavements than terra-cotta tiles with incised ornaments (Fig. 51), generally geometrical in design, which were set in an infinite variety of ways, and sometimes glazed, so that the floor was exceedingly smooth and shone like a mirror. This kind of floor, which may be regarded as characteristic of the mediæval period, afterwards fell into disuse, leaving no other trace of itself save in the red brick plaster pavement still used in Holland. The wooden floor seems never to have been treated artistically. In Northern countries during the Middle Ages it satisfied neither artistic nor physical requirements. These were met by the very general use of carpets and tapestries,[17] which play a very important part in the domestic life of that period. The poets never describe a princely dwelling without alluding to them as covering the floor, the walls, and, to some extent, also, the furniture. They were hung before windows and doors to prevent draughts, and around beds; and they served to preserve the privacy of family life, as they were used to partition off the immense rooms which we have described (see Fig. 52, p. 70), into small sleeping and dressing places for ladies, as well as to close up the deep windows so as to make them habitable

Materials used for pavements.

The wooden floor.

Mediæval use of carpets and tapestries.

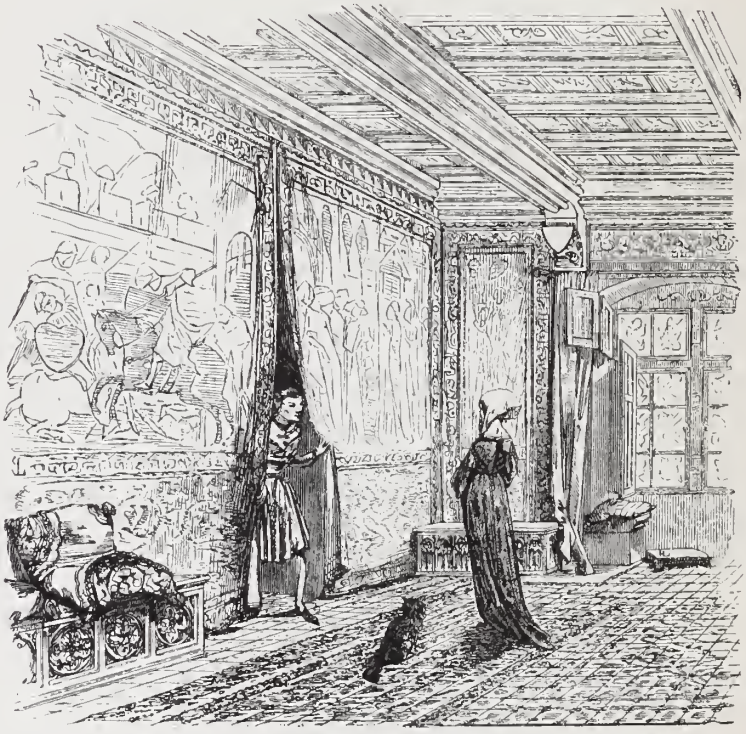
[17] Oriental carpets were introduced into England from Spain under Edward I., and tapestries were first generally used in the same reign. The latter were carried about in cypress chests during campaigns and royal progresses. Froissart says that the tent in which the Duke of Lancaster entertained the King of Portugal, between Monçal and Malgaço, was fitted up with hangings of arras, as if the host had been at Hertford, Lancaster, or any of his manors. When Isabel of Bavaria made her entry into Paris in 1313, the whole street at St. Denis through which she passed was covered with a canopy of rich camlet and silk cloths, and all the houses as far as the châtelet, or, indeed, to the great bridge, were hung with tapestries representing various scenes and histories, to the delight of all beholders. (Froissart, Johne's Tr., II. p. 400; cited by Pollen, op. cit. p. lxxxv. Int.)

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places. Thus it was that all the comfort and charm of a mediæval dwelling, so far as it had any, depended chiefly on the use of hangings.

They were, however, very sparingly used before the twelfth century, and the use of figured tapestries, the predecessors of the "Gobelin," for wall decoration, dates from a still later time, after they had long been used for the same purpose in churches. In very many cases they were worked by ladies,

Fig. 52



whose mode of life in the castle gave them much spare time for embroidery, with which they beguiled many tedious hours.[18] Most of the fabrics of this sort, however, entirely of wool, were woven piece by piece and put together like mosaics.

Figured tapestries.

[18] "There she weaves, by night and day,
A magic web with colors gay."
Lady of Shalott.

The features and lines of the faces were afterwards stitched or painted in by a more skilful hand. When these same stuffs were intended for carpets and furniture coverings, their patterns were strictly ornamental, but in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, those which were meant to cover the walls were decorated with figures, so that they corresponded exactly to monumental wall-painting, and were brought to that perfection reached in the marvellous tapestries woven at Arras after the cartoons of Raphael.

Fig. 53.



In numerous examples of this kind, dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the subjects are precisely the same as those of contemporary mural paintings, consisting of scenes taken from poems, myths, and real life, as well as of games and allegories, often accompanied with explanatory legends. There is in the German Museum at Nuremberg a large piece of tapestry of the second half of the fourteenth century, representing a mock tournament, or species of social game, under the eyes of the Queen of Love. Ladies lead the knights bound into the lists, and one among them goes upon all fours carrying a lady on his back. She lifts her right leg so as to meet the raised foot of an approaching knight in order to thrust it from the stirrup, and throw him out of his saddle. In another piece of tapestry, now in Nancy, which once figured among the treasures of the rich household of Charles the Bold of Burgundy, the dangers of self-indulgence are personified by a great number of figures. Gluttony, Drunkenness,

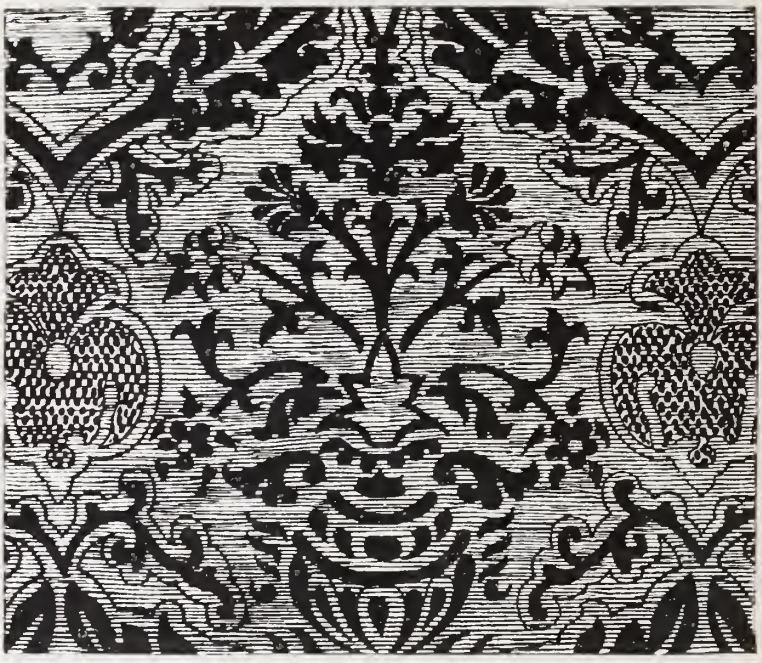
Allegorical subjects.

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Idleness, and Sociability have become the victims of Banquet and Supper, who have conspired against them. Calling upon Gout, Colic, and Apoplexy to assist them, they drag the accused before the tribunal of Dame Experience, who presides over the court with the assistance of several doctors. Banquet is sentenced to be hung, but mitigating circumstances are admitted in the case of Supper. This is certainly an excellent subject for a dining-hall.

In those earlier centuries, when pieces of furniture were

Fig. 54.



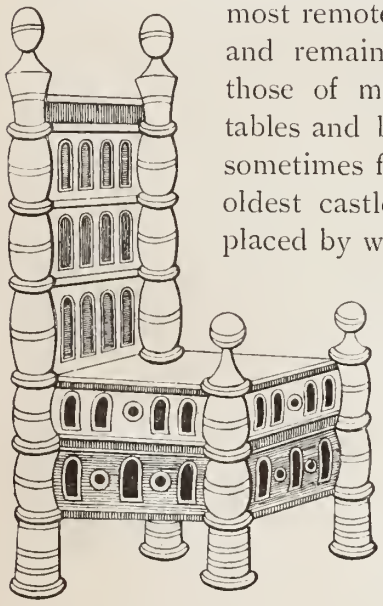
rudely and simply constructed, the woven fabrics and coverings used upon them served alike for purposes of beauty and comfort. Even in later times they were absolutely essential to seats of all kinds, as in the Middle Ages these were not cushioned. They were therefore covered with soft fabrics, and had loose cushions of great elegance laid upon them. The backs of chairs were covered with so-called back-cloths (Fig. 53), generally embroidered with the family coat of arms

or insignia systematically arranged. In the case of thrones and seats of honor, the whole of the high back was covered with such insignia, while the upper part of the back supported a baldacchino of cloth of gold with golden fringes. In earlier times a richly adorned seat was simply placed under such a baldacchino, which was supported upon posts or pillars.

Mediæval furniture always of wood.

Though great changes were made in the forms of furniture during the Middle Ages, the material was always wood. Metal seats and metal tables were used in the most remote period, so long as the traditions and remains of antiquity were extant, and those of marble only in the South. Stone tables and benches attached to the wall are sometimes found in the bay-windows of the oldest castles, but these were gradually replaced by wooden ones, especially during the Gothic period.

Fig. 55.



Halls scantily furnished.

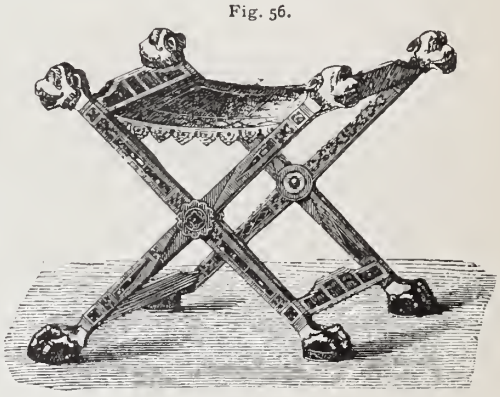
The old Merovingian, Anglo-Saxon, and Carlovingian halls were very scantily furnished with benches of the simplest kind, and with tables which were taken to pieces and carried away at night. The seat of honor of the feudal chief, which stood at the upper end of the hall, although but rudely carved and grotesquely decorated with dogs' or lions' heads, was the only piece of furniture which made any show of splendor, and this because it was generally gilded. Sometimes it stood upon a raised platform called the dais. The painting of furniture in different colors became common during the succeeding centuries, and was the only form of decoration in the tenth and eleventh, when the art of wood-carving was very little practised. The posts and legs of beds, tables, and chairs seem for the most part to have been turned on a lathe. (Fig. 55.) Soon, however, they began to be deco-

CHAP. II.

rated with ivory inlays, though these were more common in the church than in the castle or the house. Furniture in the Romanesque style, although richer in design, and colored throughout, or covered with gay stuffs (Fig. 53), still preserved a stiff, heavy, massive character. This had not wholly disappeared when, in the Gothic period, painting was superseded by carving, which in the fifteenth century fairly overloaded pieces of furniture with an excess of delicate ornament. Its massiveness of character came from its construction, which, though suitable to the structure and properties of wood, looked rather like the work of a carpenter or a builder than that of a cabinet-maker. The supporting and supported parts were united upon correct principles, but the wood-work was too massive, the construction too straight-lined, and the proportions were too clumsy. (Plate XII.) Hence the furniture was both unwieldy and uncomfortable. The result was, that throughout the Middle Ages chairs and seats were very little used, although they were made in various forms, among which was that of the light folding camp-stool.[19] (Fig. 56.) The chair most in favor had arms, and a back which rose high above the head and terminated in a roof-like canopy.[20] (See Fig. 57, p. 75.) It was always the place of honor, and hence there was seldom more than one in a room. The most common seat was a bench, either fastened to the wall or set against it. It was the more cumbrous because the

Heaviness and stiffness of furniture.

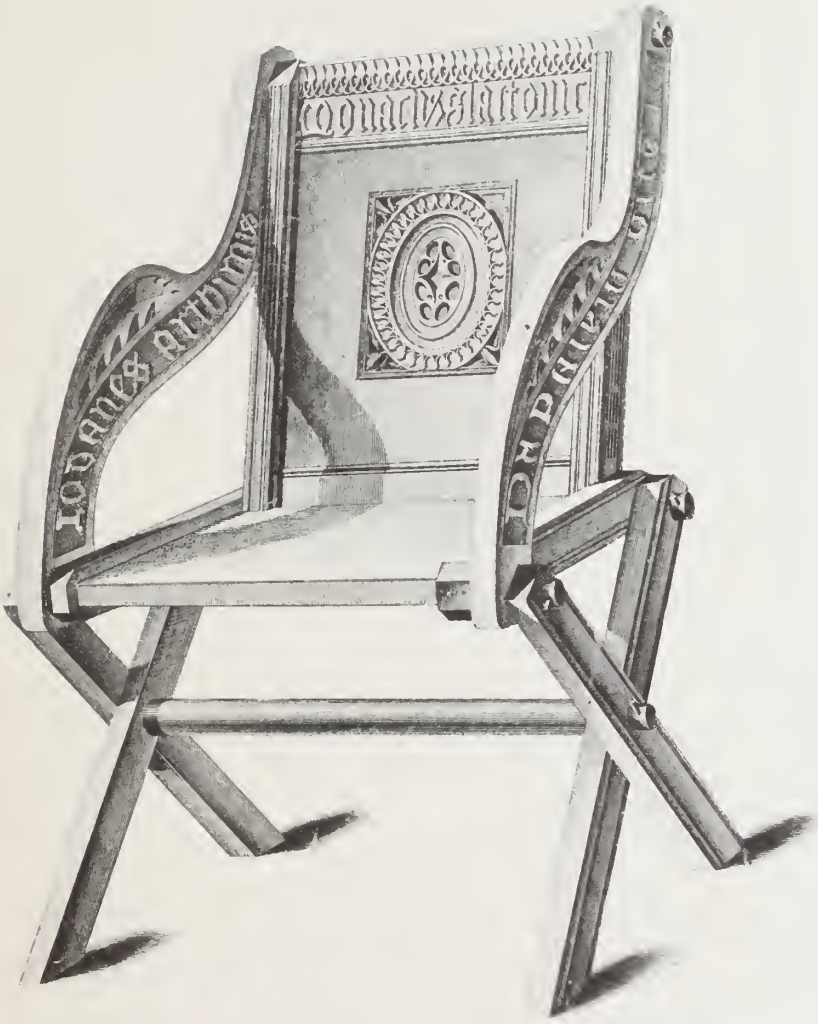
Fig. 56.



Different kinds of chairs used.

[19] Of all forms for seats this is the most universal. We find it in use in ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, at the courts of the *rois fainéants* in France, in all parts of Europe in the Middle Ages, and in our own day.

[20] This chair of honor, the "faldestol," or "faudesteuil," is sometimes called the "dais," though this word is more properly applied to a raised platform at the end of a hall.



lower part was always made into a chest.[21] The carved decoration on the front made it handsomer, but did not make it lighter. This evil increased when in the fifteenth century

Fig. 57.



chambers were generally wainscoted. Its wooden walls made the room infinitely warmer, more habitable, and more attractive, and it is upon them chiefly that the fair fame of

Wainscoted walls.

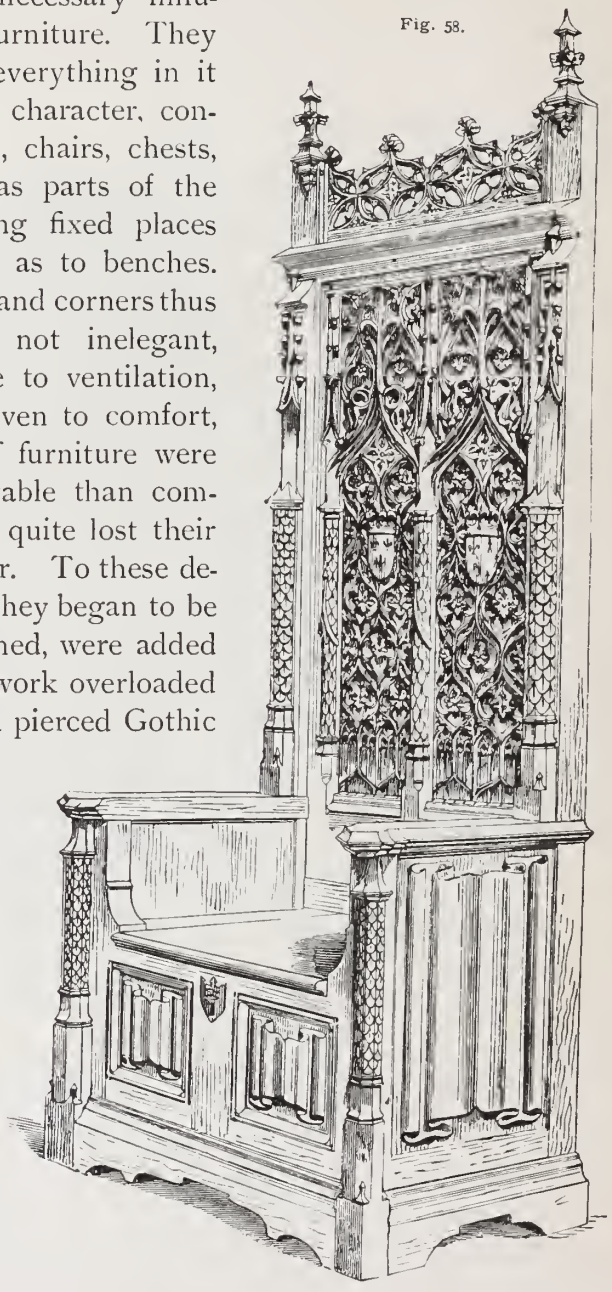
[21] The beds of straw stuffed into a bag, which the soldiers laid at night on the tops of such benches, were kept in the chest underneath. Bedsteads were sometimes treated in the same way. Thus the under part of the bed at the Blue Boar at Leicester, upon which Richard III. slept, in August, 1485, served as his military chest, and in it, about a century after his death at Bosworth, a quantity of gold coin worth about £300 was found.

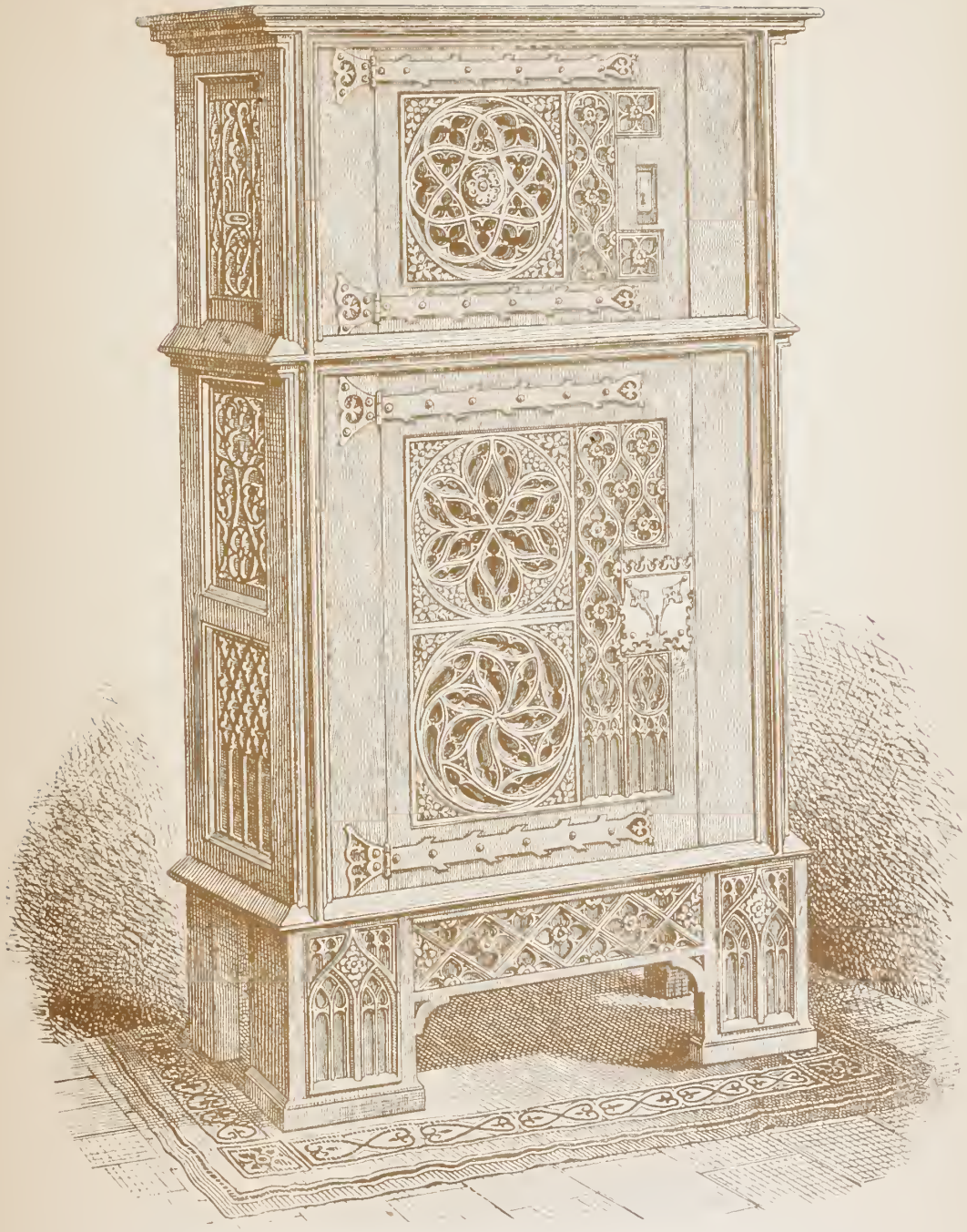
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mediæval domestic architecture rests; but they exercised a real, though unnecessary influence upon the furniture. They tended to give everything in it an architectural character, considering benches, chairs, chests, and even beds as parts of the house, and giving fixed places to tables as well as to benches. The cosey nooks and corners thus formed, though not inelegant, were unfavorable to ventilation, cleanliness, and even to comfort, for the pieces of furniture were rather uncomfortable than comfortable, and had quite lost their movable character. To these defects, so soon as they began to be more richly adorned, were added those of a framework overloaded with foliated and pierced Gothic ornaments, with circle-struck patterns (Plate XIII.), borrowed from architecture by the cabinet-makers, with leaf and branch work, with buttresses and gargoyles, with brackets and little figures, canopies and finials, all of which were out of place, as they again made solid furniture weak, caught and retained

Architectural character of Gothic furniture.

Fig. 58.





GOTHIC CABINET.

15th Century.

dust, and with their endless complication of detail disturbed the peace of mind of those who used them. Thus the Gothic style itself destroyed what it had brought of good to the mediæval house.

It is to be regretted that this later florid Gothic style has been taken as a pattern for modern imitation in house furniture. Even when it is made to produce a good effect by the help of stained windows and rich brown wooden walls and ceilings of a generally warm and agreeable tone, the pleasant impression is frequently destroyed by the clumsiness and inconvenience of the furniture, encumbered with ornament, put in the wrong place. We dare not move for fear of breaking off a leaf, a bud, or a piece of a finial; or we tremble for our clothes, and when we seat ourselves at table are sure to knock our kneês against some unseen point which sticks out from the table-top. No less does the owner suffer from anxiety lest a clumsy servant should break the ornate framework to pieces in the process of cleaning it, which is doubly necessary and trebly difficult.

Its inconveniences and drawbacks.

These defects should not, however, blind us to that which was good in the Gothic house. (Fig. 59.) After the glazing of windows had been fully introduced in the fifteenth century, it developed from the rude, bare, unartistic, and unattractive character of an absolutely uncivilized beginning, to a state of artistic completeness, and even attained a certain degree of comfort. A moment's consideration of the great hall, the dining and banqueting rooms, and of the women's apartments cannot fail to be of interest.

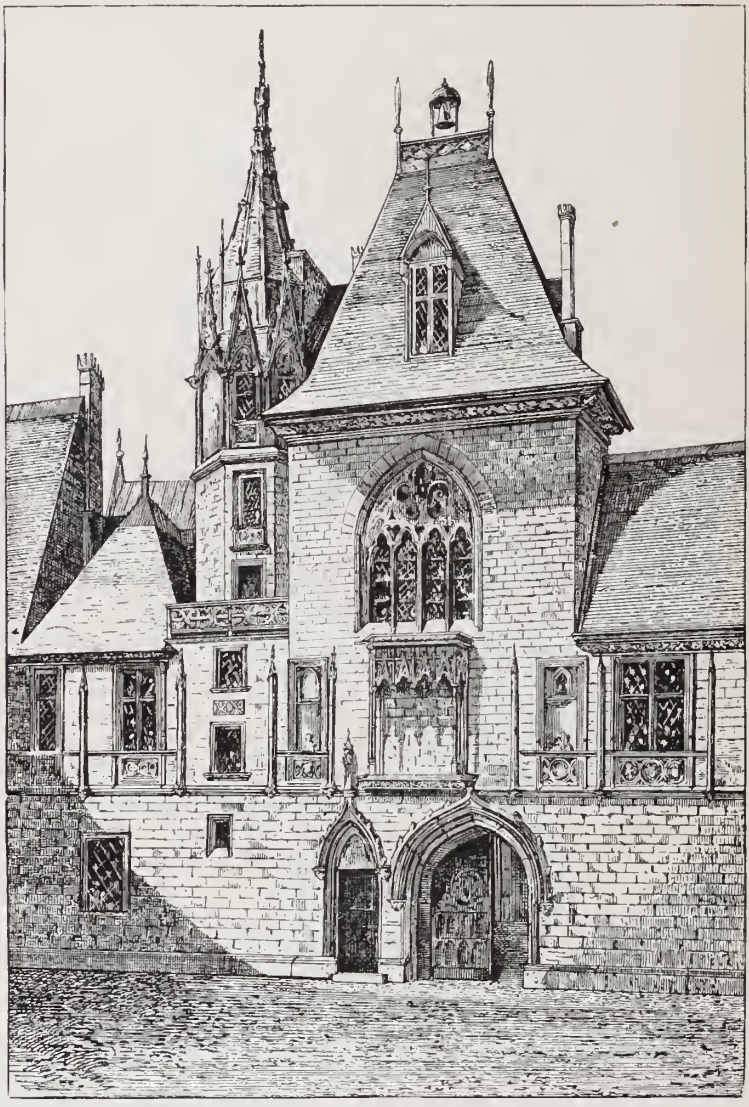
The Gothic hall.

The hall had originally been cheerless and empty. Relatively it still remained bare of furniture, unless when it was used both as a living and sleeping room, but it still retained that which gave it elegance and charm. The ceiling was vaulted, and either painted, or wainscoted and carved. There were as yet no family portraits or easel pictures of any kind hung upon the walls, which were either panelled or revêtted with a thin covering of wood below, and decorated with ornamental or figure painting above. (Plate XIV.) On festal

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occasions, large pieces of tapestry, representing all sorts of subjects, were hung upon hooks, and gave warmth and color to the room. Benches stood against its long sides and in the

Fig. 59.

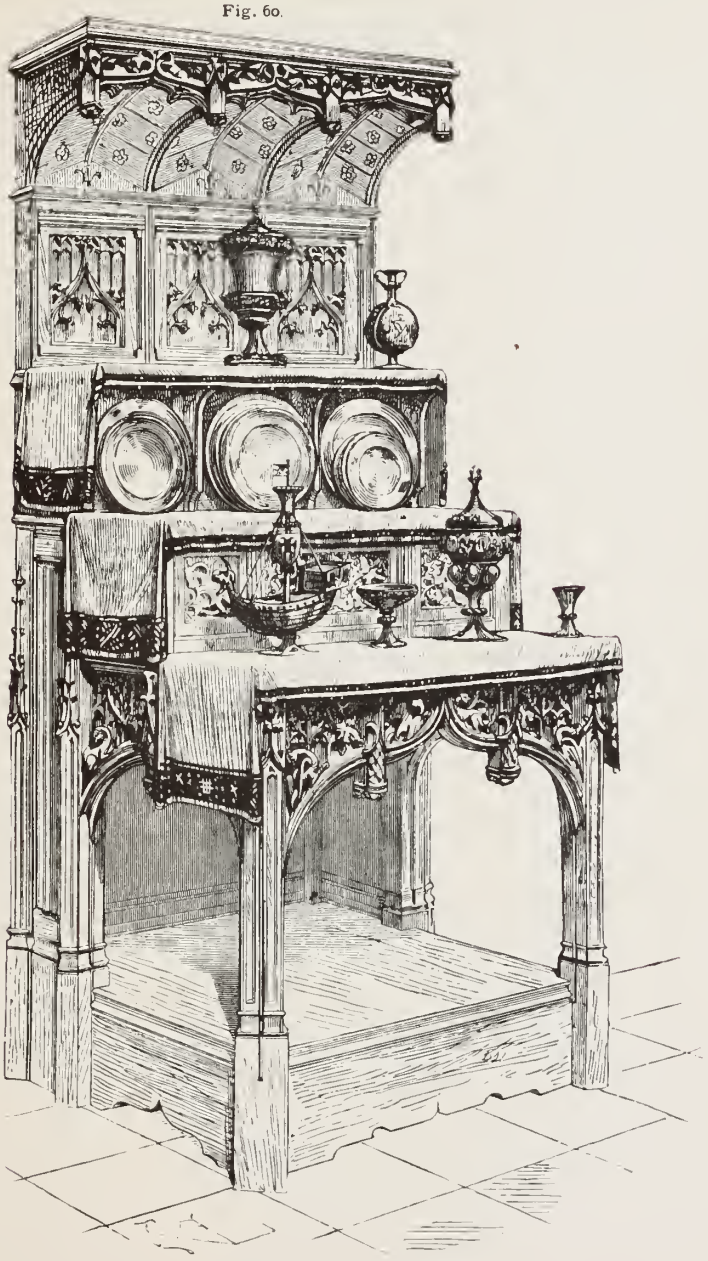


deep embrasures of the windows, with well-made but somewhat clumsy tables placed before them at intervals. Cloths to pro-



tect the back were hung on the walls behind the benches, and pieces of carpet were laid on the seats. The floor, which was

Fig. 60.



CHAP. II.

The floor and the fireplace.

made either of wood or tiles, or of pounded and polished plaster, was seldom covered with a foot-carpet, but separate bits were laid where they were most needed; as, for example, before the fireplace, whose mantel-piece projected far out into the room and was so high that a man could stand upright beneath it. Great logs supported upon andirons of wrought iron burned upon the hearth in winter, throwing a shifting ruddy light over the divers dark or gayly colored objects in the hall. All sorts of metal vessels, candlesticks, and jugs of tin or pottery, both ornamental and useful, stood upon the richly carved mantel-piece. The specially ornamental plate, such as silver goblets, cans, and pitchers, table-ware, artistic candlesticks, and those fantastic articles made of the precious metals, which were loved, collected, and prized in the Middle Ages rather for the beauty of their workmanship than for their intrinsic value, stood upon a "dressoir" (Fig. 60) especially made for the purpose, which was richly carved and furnished with shelves rising one above the other. Each shelf was covered with a long, narrow white napkin, with finely woven or embroidered ends upon which the silver plate was set. When the shape of the hall allowed it, this piece of furniture was placed on one of its shorter sides, whilst the tables at which the guests sat were ranged along the walls to the right and left. The chair of state with its high back, its baldacchino, and its hangings of cloth of gold stood opposite the "dressoir," at the other side of the hall. At meal-times a table was placed before it. The middle of the hall was left open for the numerous servants, for the music which was subsequently removed to a gallery, and for the various games and pantomimes with which the guests were entertained while at table. If we add to this the many-colored dresses of knights and ladies, we have before us a picture of the mediæval hall full of life and splendor, whose peculiar features might well rejoice an artist's eye. (Plate XV.)

Different pieces of furniture.

Women's apartments.

The apartments of the women, also, had gradually become handsomer and more comfortable. This was all the more desirable, because the life of a lady in a feudal castle, espe-



INTERIOR OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

From a French MS.

cially in winter, or during the absence of the men, was painfully monotonous. For hours and days together she occupied her favorite seat in the window recess, later in the bow-window, and looked out over the woods, heedful of every bird; or watched the highway and those who travelled upon it; everything was a welcome subject of conversation. The women decorated these chamber nooks with soft seat-cushions and embroidered hangings, and divided them from the rest of the room by curtains.

The bed and its appointments.

As the lady's sitting-room was always her sleeping-room, the bed, upon whose decoration and appointments extraordinary sums were expended during the Middle Ages, was

Fig. 61.



its principal piece of furniture. It was originally simple in its forms, although the antique tradition of the bronze bedstead seems to have still survived in Merovingian and Carlovingian times. (Fig. 61.) Subsequently it was made altogether of wood, which, after the twelfth century, was carved or turned, painted or inlaid with ivory and colored woods. The pillows

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were embroidered, and a rich coverlet, sometimes made of costly fur, was laid upon it.[22] From this period the bed had always, in affluent houses at least, a tester or a curtain, which was either simply suspended over it from hooks, or took the form of a square canopy, fastened by rods or chains to the ceiling joists, and to the wall at the head of the bed, of which it formed no part.[23] (Fig. 62.) The curtains hung down from the canopy to the floor on all sides, and enclosed the bed as in a small room. During the day the curtains were drawn, but at night they were closed, and a small lamp was lighted which hung suspended within the canopy. Canopies were in some cases only half the size of the bed, in others so much larger that there was sufficient space within the curtains for a chair at its head, or even for a second bed.

[22] The description of the sleeping-apartment of the wife of a retail-dealer in cloth, taken from a book called *Le Trésor des Dames*, by Christine de Pisan, gives us an idea of the extreme luxury which was indulged in by French tradesmen in the fourteenth century. The two rooms preceding the bedchamber each contained a richly curtained bed, and the second a great sideboard or "dressoir" covered like an altar (i. e. having a dais of rich stuff or carved wood), upon which stood a great deal of silver plate. The spacious and beautiful chamber of the mistress of the house was hung with tapestry richly worked with her device in gold. The hangings of the large and beautiful bed were very rich, and the carpets about it were worked in gold thread. The sheets, which were of Rheims linen of the utmost fineness, were valued at 3,240 francs. Over these lay a covering of woven gold, covered with a linen sheet as soft as silk, woven in one piece, and so large that it covered the whole bed and fell to the ground on all sides. It was a novelty valued at 2,160 francs. The "dressoir" in the chamber was covered with silver-gilt plate. The lady lying in the bed was dressed in crimson silk, and her pillow was of the same material, embroidered with pearls. (Batissier, p. 647.)

[23] The tester was strained over a wooden framework, and hung rather than supported. The curtains ran round this frame as in our modern four-posters. The carved oak bedstead of the great French hotels and palaces was a frame panelled down to the ground, often containing chests, drawers, presses, or other hiding-places under the sleeper. The back resembled the reredos of an altar, or the great panelled presses that filled the sides of sacristies, and the canopy or tester was a frame of panelling supported upon four posts. In England these were carved with figures of the four Evangelists. "Four Gospellorus on the four pillorus" are on each post. (Pollen, op. cit. Int. p. clxv. et seq.) The most famous bed in England is that of Ware in Hertfordshire, at the Saracen's Head. It is twelve feet square, and belongs to the reign of Queen Elizabeth. See Plate XX., reproduced from Shaw's furniture. This bed is referred to in *Twelfth Night*, Act III., sc. 2.

At a later period, when with the Gothic style carved wood became more common and more elaborate in the house, the bed also underwent changes. The tester itself was made of wood, and supported upon posts which were attached to the four corners of the bedstead, and the curtains on its three sides were replaced by plank walls, so that it was transformed

Fig. 62.



into a wooden chest, whose one open side was closed by a curtain. (Plate XI., A.) This bedstead, which was richly carved, but for the rest clumsy, inconvenient, and very prejudicial to the health on account of its want of ventilation, was another of the extravagances of Gothic cabinet-work, which continually lost itself in architecture.

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Position of the bed.

The rule in handsome houses of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was, that the bed should be generally so placed in a corner of the chamber, with the head against the wall, as to leave a narrow passage-way between it and the side wall, just broad enough to admit an arm-chair at the back, whilst its front entrance was closed by a curtain. The passage-way, which plays a conspicuous part in stories of the court and of manners in the following period, was called the "ruelle" or alley. Its floor was generally carpeted, and a footstool was placed in it for convenience in getting into bed, which sometimes took the form of a step running its whole length.

The "ruelle."

Bedroom furniture.

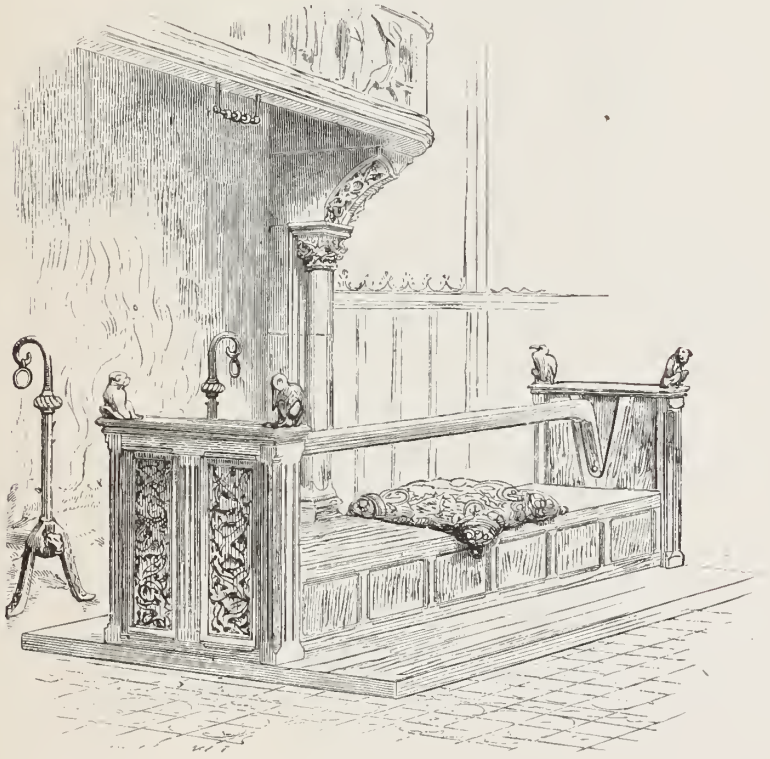
This footstool or step, the carpet by the side of the bed, and the chair at its head, are always represented in pictures, especially in those of the fifteenth century. Another piece of furniture in the lady's chamber — and this is a custom already mentioned in all epic poems — was a sofa-like chest with hangings and cushions, placed outside the curtains at the foot of the bed, in which ladies usually kept their rich dresses and jewels, and to which the lady always conducted her visitors, so long as it was the custom for her to receive them in her bedroom. Subsequently a separate, and, so to speak, neutral visiting-room was added to the house, which we should call the parlor or the "salon." A second bench, decorated in the same style as the other, and very comfortably arranged, always stood before the fireplace. (Fig. 63.) It had a movable back, which could be turned either way, so that one could sit at will with one's back or face to the fire, without being obliged to change its position. As the lady's wardrobe was kept in another room, where her maids worked, which had a row of stationary presses around it (Plate XI., B.), there was hardly any more furniture needed in her chamber than the articles which we have enumerated; but a piece of furniture with shelves like an "étagère," covered with all sorts of objects of "virtú," is sometimes represented in pictures.

The floor and walls.

The floor was entirely carpeted, or covered with separate bits of carpet, lying before the chimney, the seats, and in the

"ruelle," while the walls to a certain height were hung either with costly woven fabrics, thick woollen cloths embroidered with ornaments and figures, or with silk brocades shot with gold and silver threads woven in handsome broadly treated patterns, and sometimes decorated with the lady's arms, or with those of her husband alternately. After windows began to be glazed (and this was first done in the lady's chamber),

Fig. 63.



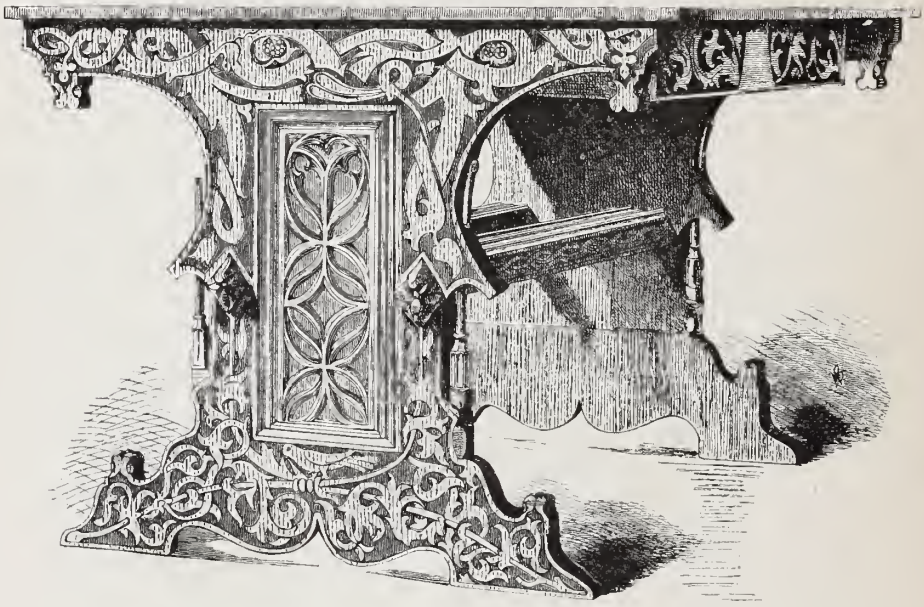
we can well imagine that when the light shone cheerfully through the small round panes, or shed a colored glory through the painted window, the living-rooms of this mediæval type must have been both comfortable and attractive, and in genuine splendor not unworthy to be occupied by dames of high degree.

But much remained to be accomplished, especially in the

CHAP. II.

burgher's house, which was neither rich nor splendid.[24] The dwellings of the patricians who had grown rich in trade alone

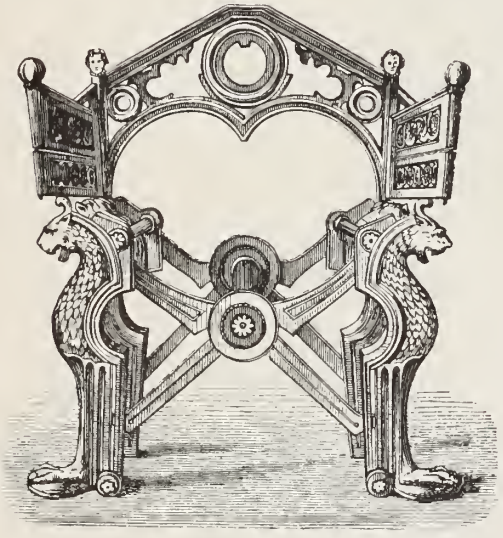
Fig. 64.



outshone those of the smaller nobility. The patricians kept their wealth together, saw more of the world, advanced in

[24] The great feature of house architecture in England, France, and Germany during the fifteenth century is richly decorated apparent construction. This showing of the structural parts of the house, which is a Gothic principle, was in harmony with the material commonly used for house-building, namely, wood, which was easily procured from the vast forests of Great Britain, France, Germany, and the more northern portions of Europe. Brick and stone were used for churches, castles, and manors, but timber was the great building-material for houses, and of it whole cities, such as London, Rouen, Blois, etc., were constructed. The huge oaken posts, 16 to 24 inches in section, which constituted their framework, were covered with ornamental tracery, and those at the angles were decorated with canopied niches containing statuettes of Saints and Madonnas. With all this wealth of sculpture, and the picturesque shadows cast by overhanging stories and projecting oriel windows, and the variety of tone produced by the patterned brick or plaster fillings of the spaces between the framing-posts, the effect was wonderfully rich and striking. Nor must we forget to add to this list of the elements which made the house of this period a marvel of its kind, the painted and gilt pictures of angels carved upon the ends of the hammer-beams of great roofs, which sustained the timber behind them on their outstretched wings.

culture, in feeling, and taste for art, and in their love of pleasure and pomp of life. From them a like taste spread among the burghers. This was especially the case in the sixteenth century, when domestic luxury greatly increased in towns, favored as it was by an artistic development which embraced all trades and handicrafts.



CHAPTER III.

THE HOUSE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

The mediæval house.



IN the foregoing chapter we were obliged, in a certain sense, to begin the history, the furnishing, and the decoration of the dwelling-house anew. We found that when the antique world came to an end, the people living north of the Alps, who were now to become the chief actors in history, were devoid of art and intellectual culture, lacking not only the means, but the desire for, and the appreciation of, refined life. A thousand years or so were to elapse, different eras of culture and art were to succeed one another, before the dwellings even of the higher and wealthier classes acquired a distinct artistic physiognomy, adapted to the requirements of a life of physical comfort, gentle manners, and ripe culture.

The Renaissance house.

It was at the close of the Middle Ages, when all necessary material conditions (among which the glazing of windows was the last and most important) had been fulfilled, that art entered at once upon the most flourishing period which it has known in modern times. In Italy, at least, this art revival was joined with a perfection of culture, an appreciation of intellectual pleasures, a refinement of manners, and a genial participation in social intercourse, such as may since have been more widely diffused, but has never been surpassed.

The effect of this art and this civilization upon the arrangement of the house was, of course, the more striking, the more

Social influences.

the process of political development tended to make the life of the individual private, and taught him to seek the chief centre of attraction in his home and family, rather than in public life. The absolutism of princely power absorbed the courts of the country lords; members of the nobility flocked into the cities and built their palaces there,[1] whilst their castles, at least as far as their defences were concerned, were allowed to fall into decay. The burgher, being compelled to lead a narrow and self-centred life by his forced withdrawal from participation in public affairs, was brought to establish himself more comfortably within his four walls. Art had not yet, as now, been divided into higher and lower, namely, artistic and industrial. It was intimately associated with life, so that not only a general and active interest was taken in it, but the artisan himself worked under the influence of a sound taste elevated by high aims. On the other hand, the greatest artists did not disdain to exercise what are considered the inferior branches of their profession. Architects, builders, and painters took part in decoration with equal zest, showing that they considered the perfecting and harmonizing of the whole to be a worthy aim. Thus everything combined to bring about a similar though somewhat differently constituted position of things in relation to the house from

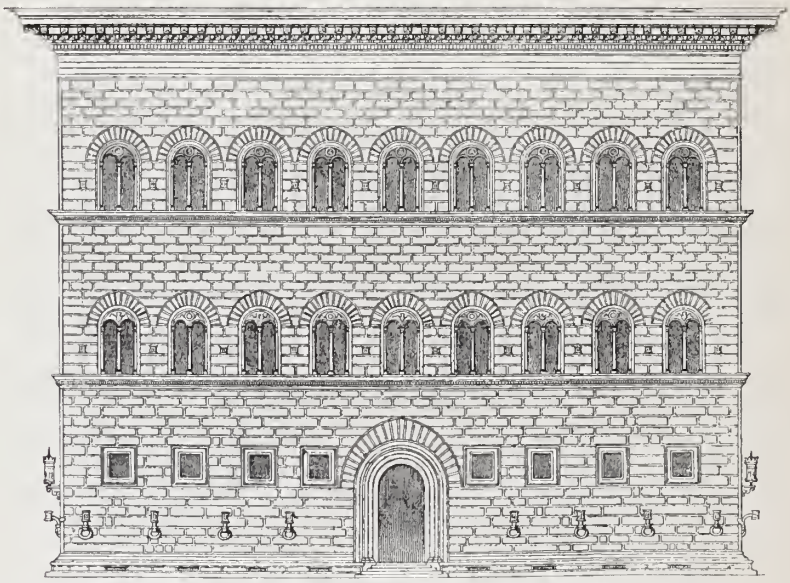
Union of art and industry.

[1] These palaces long wore something of that defensive aspect which belonged to the feudal castle, such, for instance, as that given by the tower, the high basement of solid stone, the grated windows in the lower story, and the iron rings and chains used at times of popular outbreak. As the prince entered more and more into communication with the outer world and felt more confidence in his subjects, he gradually gave his palace a less and less fortress-like character. The opening of wide windows to admit light into the dwellings of the nobles, and that pouring in of intellectual light which followed upon the study of antique art and literature, were results which mark the Renaissance period as an era of emancipation from feudalism and enslaved thought. The castle at Pavia, built in the fourteenth century by Galeazzo Visconti, marks a time of transition, when the double feeling still existed; and this is equally perceptible in many Italian and Spanish palaces both of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Strozzi Palace (Fig. 65) at Florence, and several palaces of the same character at Siena, may be taken as examples of the half-palace, half-fortress like character of Italian edifices in the fifteenth century. They are stamped with the impress of the age to which they belong.

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that which existed in antiquity. Culture refined life, art ennobled luxury, and a solid basis for this refined life and this ennobled luxury was formed by that universal prosperity

Fig. 65.



which prevailed in most civilized lands at the close of the fifteenth and during the sixteenth centuries.

Complete change of style.

We may therefore regard the transition out of the previous period to that which we have now under consideration, that is, from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance,[2] as a great step

[2] Dates as defining periods like the Middle Ages and the Renaissance are useful, though if taken literally they lead to error. Transitions from one state of society into another are gradual, and not at all parallel in different countries. We speak broadly of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, as archæologists speak of the stone age, the bronze age, etc.; but as the bronze age in one country may be contemporaneous with the stone age in another, so may mediævalism still maintain its hold here, after it has lost it elsewhere. As a general definition, we say that the Middle Ages began with the fall of the Western Empire, A. D. 476, and closed with the taking of Constantinople in 1455, though the mediæval period proper did not commence till the eleventh century, and really represents the most flourishing epoch of feudalism under the influence of the Crusades and chivalry. So also we date the Renaissance from the middle of the fifteenth century, although in Italy it began a hundred years earlier, when Petrarch and Boccaccio commenced that search for and study of ancient MSS. which was continued and

in advance in all that relates to our subject; but it is not only this, it is also a transition from one art style to another, and, at the outset, from one country to another. For this reason, whilst in discussing the Middle Ages we looked upon the Northern races as the chief representatives of mediæval culture, our attention is now to be fixed upon Italy, the cradle of Humanism,[3] of modern art, and of modern forms of society.

Renaissance reforms.

The Northern Gothic had thoroughly accomplished its work as far as it was able. It had rendered the house and

followed by the gathering together of antique treasures of art and the establishment of professorial chairs for the study of ancient languages under the Albizzi, the Medici, and other Italian princes, and which finally culminated in the golden days of Leo X.'s reign at Rome. In France the Renaissance era began with the return of Charles VIII. and Louis XII. from their Italian expeditions at the end of the fifteenth century, but it was not fairly inaugurated until Francis I. returned home from his first transalpine journey in 1515. The new ideas, whose propagation as tending to the emancipation of the human mind from the bonds of superstition and pedantry is the glory of the Renaissance, penetrated slowly into Germany. The last knight, in the best sense of the name, was the Emperor Maximilian, the friend and patron of Albert Dürer, during whose reign Germany was purged of those armed robbers, the free knights, who perpetuated the worst features of mediævalism, and practised none of its nobler virtues. If, when we speak of the Renaissance in architecture, we mean the return to classical styles, we may fairly date this in Tuscany from the early part of the fifteenth century, and head it with the name of Brunelleschi; but we must remember that his predecessor Orgagna had used the Roman arch with the greatest boldness in the Loggia de' Lanzi at Florence, in the second half of the fourteenth century, and that the chain of connection between the architectural forms of the Roman Empire and those of the Renaissance was never absolutely broken. The Norman and Romanesque styles, as exemplified in English, French, Spanish, and Italian mediæval buildings, are like threads woven into a Gothic tapestry, showing the persistence of the more or less modified classical feeling, even when Gothic forms had obtained the mastery. In the thirteenth century, when Gothic architecture was at its purest and best period north of the Alps, we find Niccola Pisano studying classical forms in Italy, and this at Pisa, where the Byzantinized Bonnano, with his German coadjutor, Magister Jacobus, had already built the Leaning Tower, in which debased Roman forms show themselves.

[3] That remarkable mental phase of the fifteenth century, known by the name of Humanism, is well defined by a writer in the *Edinburgh Review* for July, 1872, as being, "psychologically, the questioning of man's understanding with the awakened sensibilities of his soul; and historically, as the turning aside of students from the technical ways of thought stereotyped in the learning of the schools, to investigate the experience and the taste of classical antiquity under their natural conditions." Humanism is in fact but another name for the intellectual emancipation of men from priestly and scholastic thraldom.

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its interior convenient, artistic, characteristic, and harmonious, but not without finally wandering out of the true path. It had fashioned furniture so architecturally that it had changed its nature from something movable into something fixed and stiff. In this respect the ensuing period of art had to restore freedom and portability to furniture, to detach it from the wall and set it upon its feet. In another respect, however, the Renaissance had to bring back artistic order and regularity by putting down license and caprice. We have seen how the knightly, and still more the lordly dwelling in the early Middle Ages had been shaped under the influence of political exigencies, upon a rigid system of arrangement, which remained in force so long as these edifices were subject to the lordship of the hall. But when the custom of private warfare necessitated the construction of fortified castles, and the way in which they were laid out was absolutely dependent upon the configuration and elevation of the ground, that is, on the forms of rock ridges and cliff projections on which they were built, uniformity of plan was impossible, and irregularity became, one might almost say, the rule. Hence arose a picturesque grouping of the exterior, which, however much in harmony with the natural features of the landscape, and therefore charming to the eye, positively prevented anything like a systematic ground-plan, and turned the interior into an intricate combination of angles, a perfect labyrinth filled with all manner of staircases for outgoing and incoming, and all sorts of passageways and corners. This also exercised an influence upon the chambers, which, with their niches in the thick walls, with the deep embrasures of their windows and their many angular projections, were already sufficiently irregular. Such irregularities, as we have said, have their charm, and may be employed so as to enhance the impression of comfort and elegance; but art cannot be properly used without order, though it should not be allowed to lapse into pedantry, as it eventually did. In obedience to this principle the Renaissance sought to curb Gothic lawlessness, and to bring the whole building under the control of

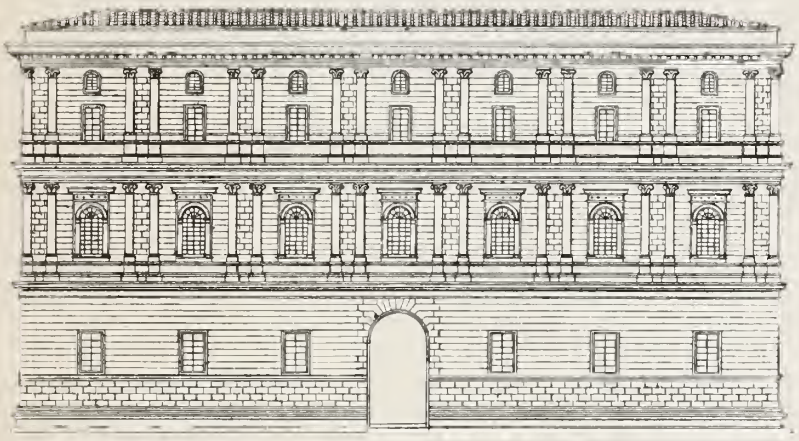
Irregularity had become the rule.

Unity and regularity of plan.

one ruling idea. It treated the façade as a complete, symmetrical whole, to which nothing could be added and from which nothing could be taken away without detriment; it placed contiguous chambers all upon one level, and gave them a certain regularity of arrangement, so that the interior of the building might correspond to the exterior. Greater freedom of plan, and a more picturesque arrangement of the larger amount of space at the architect's disposal, were allowed in the villa, not only because it was regarded as the direct successor of the mediæval castle whose walls and moats had become superfluous, but also because, as it was isolated, it

The Renaissance villa.

Fig. 66.



seemed desirable to bring it into harmony with the picturesque character of the surrounding landscape; and finally, also, because the enjoyment of nature, the regard due to the varied prospect, and to considerations of sunlight and shade, made liberty desirable, and a freer system of arrangement natural.

The builders and architects of the sixteenth century could all the more allow themselves to be influenced by purely artistic considerations in the arrangement of palaces and palatial dwellings, as those influences which had determined the construction of buildings in the Middle Ages had ceased to exist. The right of private feud, the warring of all against

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all, had ceased, so that fortified walls and towers were no longer necessary. The hall had lost its importance with the decline of feudalism, and no longer dominated over the rest of the building. Considerations of a purely private or universally social nature now prevailed. In its place the castles and palaces of the great were filled with different suites of splendid apartments, or the hall was left, an insignificant reminiscence of what it had been, to be a useless show-place, and in a manner to answer for the dignity of the lord of the castle, and for the grandeur of its design. It is so still in the Vienna palaces of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as, for instance, in the Belvidere Palace and the Liechtenstein Palace in the Rossau, both of which have been transformed from summer residences into picture-galleries. Elsewhere, more ancient families, holding their historical records sacred, gathered in it the mementos and trophies of their ancestors. This is the case, for instance, with the Palazzo Morosini at Venice, whose entrance-hall, now used only as an anteroom, is decorated with arms and trophies gained by deeds of valor, at sight of which one may well feel sympathy for a past greatness.[4] The modern baronial hall is only a revival of this degraded type. In castles and country-seats it, for the most part, degenerated into a mere servants' hall, or was utilized as a place for a staircase. In the burgher-house it dwindled into the simplest sort of vestibule or entry, which in England still retains its stately, high-sounding, and significant name.

Social changes influencing construction.

The hall turned to new uses.

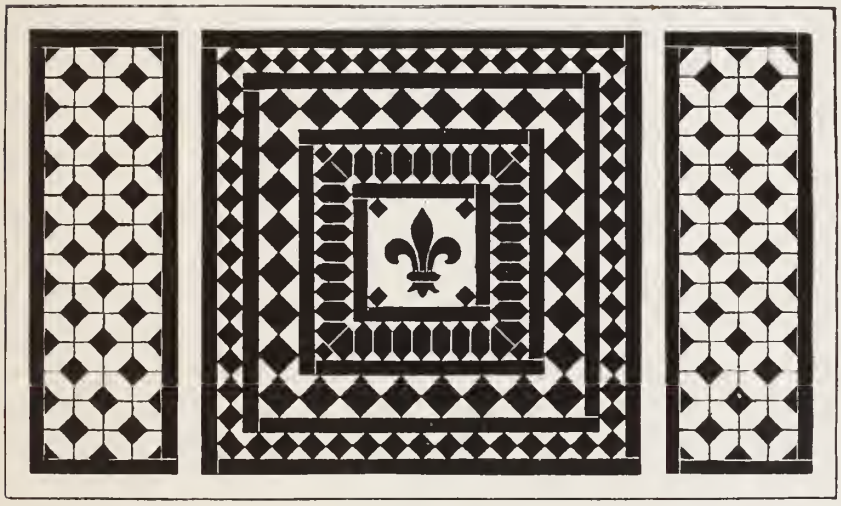
In this way art, favored by circumstances, by taste, and by public sympathy, was allowed free play; palaces and dwellings

[4] The Palazzo Morosini, in the Campo di S. Stefano at Venice, was rebuilt at the end of the sixteenth century. The arms, trophies, and standards, which decorate its two great halls, are monuments of the victories won by the illustrious Francesco Morosini, called the Peloponnesian, who was born there. There, also, may be seen his bust in bronze, which was cast by order of the Republic, and long adorned the hall of the Council of Ten in the Ducal Palace. The historical pictures and portraits upon the walls of this palace by Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, V. Catena, Vivarini, Paris Bordone, Tintoretto, Bonifazio, and other great painters of the Venetian school, show us the deeds of the Morosini, and the faces of those who made the family name eminent.

Influence of Italy upon the North.

were emancipated from the laws of custom, and the claims of beauty and convenience alone were recognized. Italy henceforth exercised a controlling influence upon the dwelling-houses of the North, although differences of climate naturally developed individual peculiarities. In rooms, and especially in state apartments, stone was much more used in Italy than in Germany. White marble, with all its decorative possibilities, exercised a greater influence over the fine buildings of the South than over those of the North, where wood was the favorite material for the construction of houses and furniture.

Fig. 67.



Treatment of the floor and the wall.

Stone mosaic continued to be used for the decoration of floors in Italy, either as a colored conglomerate without design, or as a rich and many-tinted ornamental mosaic, or as a geometrical arrangement of slabs of different-colored stone; while in the North, clay floors and terra-cotta tiles were replaced by wooden floors, which gradually took the artistic form of the modern parquet. The high style of art which prevailed in Italy at this period favored the production of wall-paintings rather than of easel pictures, and the great civic palaces of the South offered a wider field for mural decoration than was to be found in the North, where painting began to develop

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through easel pictures in the fifteenth century, and never attained a really grand style until the days of Rubens.

Mural decoration in the North, therefore, lost even the place which had been assigned to it during the Middle Ages in the princely dwellings, and in the castles of the more wealthy knights. On the other hand, concessions to comfort were made in Italian domestic architecture, and this in some degree owing to the influence of the North, where, on account of the climate, it had to be considered before anything else. Thus the way was opened for the influence of Italian art upon the Northern house. High art was brought by the Italians of that time into public buildings, palaces, and private dwellings.

Fresco-painting in Italy.

Vasari tells us that nobles and people of distinction in Italy employed the most eminent artists to build their houses and to decorate walls and ceilings with historical and mythological subjects, as indeed numerous extant examples prove to us.

It was not only the public buildings, the municipal palaces with their banqueting and assembly rooms, and the palaces of princes and governors, which were adorned with paintings in the highest style of art, but also those rooms in private palaces and rich men's dwellings which were appropriated to receptions, to society, and to intercourse with the outside world.[5] Upon the ceilings of private living-rooms, and in those of Venetian palaces more especially, painting and decorative architecture still found their special place for display. But although stone columns and pillars, marble sculpture

[5] The reader is referred to Gruner's valuable work upon *Fresco Decorations and Stuccos of Churches and Palaces in Italy* (London, 1854), for examples of Renaissance work of this kind. The same author's *Specimens of Ornamental Art* (London, 1850), and Waring's *Arts connected with Architecture*, may be consulted to advantage. M. Charles Yriarte's book, *La vie d'un Patricien de Venise*, which contains an account of the Villa Barbaro and its frescos, painted by Paul Veronese, gives a perfect idea of the sumptuous mode in which such patrician residences were decorated by the great artists of the time. In some instances, they not only painted the interiors, but also the exteriors of palaces in fresco, now unfortunately for the most part obliterated by the action of the sun and air. The Palazzo Balbo at Venice, for instance, was thus decorated by Paul Veronese, with frescos which have now totally disappeared.

and historical paintings, did not enter into their scheme of decoration, their adornment was by no means neglected; art and loving care for their appearance had, in view of their destination, only followed another course, and used other means to accomplish it. The walls were enriched with carved wooden wainscoting and panelling, pressed and gilded leather, silk, velvet, and gold brocade, and with easel pictures in carved, gilded, or colored frames; rich draperies hung about the windows, doors, and bedsteads; bright-colored carpets and coverings of the softest texture lay upon the floors and tables; and wooden furniture richly carved and inlaid stood about the rooms. All this produced a generally harmonious and comfortable, coupled with a rich and artistic, aspect, so that in what remains to us of it we see the true ideal of the modern dwelling. On this account we propose to study these rooms more especially, rather than such monumentally decorated villas, palaces, and halls as the Farnesina of Raphael, or the chambers of the Vatican.

General aspect of rooms in Italian palaces and houses.

As the flat ceiling was commonly used for living-rooms, it interests us first of all in our consideration of details of construction. One might almost say that the painters of this time preferred the vaulted ceiling for the practice of their art. It lent itself the more readily to pictorial decoration, in so far as its cross-beam divisions formed a system of arrangement, while the ascending slope of the panels gave excellent opportunity for seeing the figures painted in them. Vault-painting, consequently, was carried to great perfection: at first alone, for the frames of the separate pictures were adorned with painted garlands of fruit and flowers or ornamental designs; and later in conjunction with stucco-work in relief, which was especially useful in that it strongly emphasized the divisions and the setting of the pictures. The application of this branch of art was, however, for the most part, limited to state and reception rooms.

Vault-painting.

The flat ceiling naturally took the place of the wooden ceiling of the Middle Ages, but it differed from it essentially. The shape of the mediæval ceiling had been wholly depend-

The flat ceiling. How treated.

ent upon the lay of its beams, which produced framed divisions. The Renaissance, which freed it from this dependence, took the sunken spaces with bold framework as a "motif," but ordered and shaped them from a purely artistic point of view.

Fig. 68.



The ceiling was still regarded as a system of intersecting beams, but of an extremely artistic nature, in which the flat spaces grouped themselves around a central space, instead of running parallel with one another through its whole length,

as in the mediæval ceiling, in which the beams intersected, and thus formed a systematic network. From this the transition was easy to the antique coffered ceiling, which, owing to the taste of the time for classical forms, was much in favor with artists, only that it was at first made of wood in private houses. (See Figs. 69 and 70.) It had, therefore, to be very materially modified; the beams which formed the network were chamfered or sloped off, the rosettes were carved, and sometimes so exaggerated in size that they filled the whole of the coffers, and reduced the surrounding mouldings to narrow strips. In regulating the size of the panels, it was adopted as a principle that they should be smaller in low rooms, and larger in those of the loftier sort.

Serlio's theory of decoration in color.

According to the theory of the architect Serlio,[6] decoration in color should be applied to the vaulted ceiling only, while the flat ceiling should be colorless. But this rule, which is purely arbitrary and rather the expression of the artist's private preference than a binding law, was quite as often violated as observed. In the commoner sort of citizen's house, the wooden ceiling was indeed usually left of its natural color, and this was often also the case in more expensively built houses, where the warm dark brown tone of the wood seemed to the artist to harmonize well with the rather severe decoration of the rest of the room. In this latter case the want was often made up by elaborate carving which made color unnecessary. Yet the instances are numerous, and perhaps preponderate, where the wooden ceiling is painted. The union of blue and gold, which had been so common in the Middle Ages, remained in favor, and now passed over to the coffered or rosette-decorated ceiling. Gilding was so common in the sixteenth century, that every palace in Venice had at least a

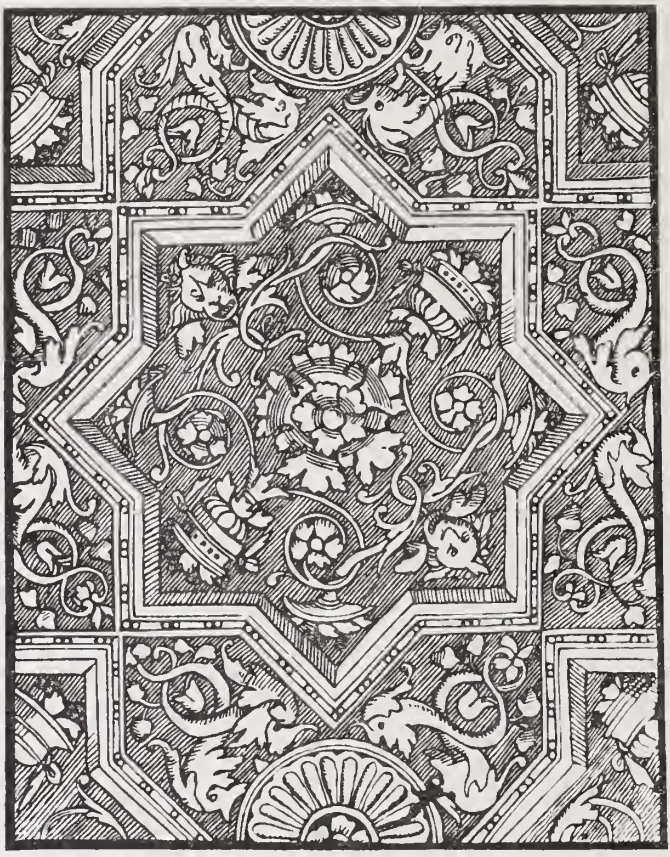
Use of gold upon ceilings.

[6] Sebastiano Serlio of Bologna (b. 1475, d. 1552), scholar of Balthasar Peruzzi, the great Sienese architect at Rome, who built the Farnesina. Serlio's five books upon architecture were published at Venice in 1551 or 1559. Plate XXVIII. of Serlio's *Regole generali d' Architettura* shows Raphael's plan for the building of St. Peter's, and is the only record of it (see Passavant's *Life of Raphael*, Fr. Tr., Vol. I. p. 197), unless a doubtful drawing in the Barberini library be from his hand.

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few rooms in which the flat groundwork of the ceilings was completely gilded. Sometimes, also, gilded rosettes were set in the sunken spaces, or they were filled with colored ornaments, or picture-like figure-paintings. Several examples of the first kind of ceiling are still extant, as, for example, in the Ducal Palace at Venice, which give us a good idea of its magnificent effect.

Fig. 69.



Pictures set in the ceiling.

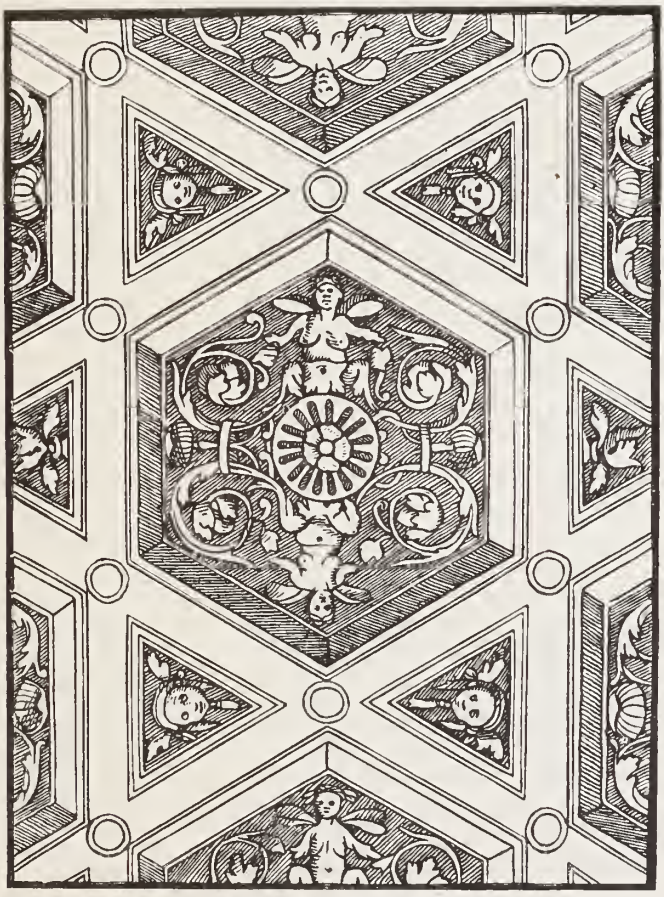
Paintings having once been introduced necessarily influenced the decorative construction of the ceiling in many ways. In the first place, they necessitated the enlargement of the spaces, and this led to a development of the ceiling which was fatal to its true character, for it came to be treated as a wall upon which independent pictures could be hung, and thus





lost its individuality. As these paintings, like other pictures, are set in the carved gilt frames, or sometimes cover the whole ceiling, the spectator may walk about and search until he has found the best place to see them from. Whether this ceiling be simply carved, gilded, ornamented in colors, or has paintings set into its panels, the general impression which it makes

Fig. 70.



is that of an earnest, solid, praiseworthy, and generally, also, a rich and splendid, though not unfrequently somewhat heavy effect. (See Plate XVI., A.) All these ceilings appear to be calculated for walls decorated in a similarly pure and severe style, and covered with colored ornament of the same char-

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acter. This is not so much the case, however, with another kind of decoration, which was to have a far greater effect upon modern ceilings. I refer to decoration in stucco both upon ceilings and walls, which came in naturally under the influence of the Renaissance. As examples of it had been found in the so-called grottos, that is, in the excavated rooms of ancient baths and palaces, conjointly with mural decoration in color, nothing was needed but the discovery of a suitable solid material, easily manipulated and therefore allowing free scope to the artist's fancy, to bring stucco ornamentation into favor. We see it turned to admirable account by Raphael and his scholars in association and alternation with painted arabesques, nowhere, however, with better effect than in the great vaulted hall of the Villa Madama, where the white stucco ornaments are relieved upon a blue ground.[7] This use of stucco was fruitful of good in two directions, but at the same time it was dangerous. So long as the freedom, nay, even the caprice, which the facility of its manipulation allowed the artist to indulge in was controlled by the sound taste of a great art-epoch, and remained under the guiding influence of the greatest artists, it was used discreetly. But

Decoration in stucco.

[7] The Villa Madama, so named after Margaret, daughter of the Emperor Charles V., widow of Duke Alessandro de' Medici, and afterwards wife of Ottavio Farnese, is situated on the slopes of Monte Mario, overlooking the Tiber, and commands a magnificent view of Rome, the Campagna, and the Sabine range of mountains. It was built by Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, afterwards Pope Clement VII., after the designs of Raphael, as we know by a letter from Count Castiglione to the Duke of Urbino, and by some drawings from Raphael's hand. It was nearly completed, with certain departures from the original design, by Giulio Romano after the death of his master (Passavant, op. cit. p. 208), and then suffered damage, though it is not certain to what extent, at the hands of Cardinal Pompeo Colonna, who wished to revenge himself upon Clement VII. for having destroyed fourteen of his castles in the Campagna of Rome. (See Gruner, op. cit. p. 3.) The villa, with its nobly proportioned halls and courts, exquisite decorations in color and stucco, by Giulio Romano and Giovanni da Udine (see Plates VI.–XII. of Gruner's work upon Fresco Decorations, already cited, in note 5), is one of the most interesting examples of the Raphaelesque school of constructive and ornamental art. The subjects of the principal compartments of the ceilings are all taken from ancient mythology, and thus that antagonism between stucco ornament and Biblical representation, which in some slight measure diminishes our satisfaction in the Loggie of the Vatican, is here done away with, and an all-pervading unity prevails.

in the Baroque period, when taste no longer took pleasure in the broadly treated forms of an earlier period, but craved exaggeration, when indulgence in caprice, extravagance, and love of effect had made the defiance of rule a principle, then stucco, which lent itself to every caprice, became a favorite but also a most dangerous material in the artist's hands. The same result then followed upon the use of stucco in the ceiling as had followed upon the setting of pictures into it: it came to be regarded as a surface proper for division into spaces decorated with every kind of relief, from the flattest to the highest, both figured and ornamental. This led to the use of cartouches [8] as borders, the most capricious of all ornaments, which violated every rule of symmetry; and to the representation of clumsy clouds and of children flying or floating in the air, with their legs, or their bodies and heads, sticking out into the room.[9]

Abuse of stucco.

The second danger lay in this, that stucco was valued as

[8] The cartouche became a mischief-working element in the hands of Raphael's successors. As being strictly sculptural in its nature, it had, strictly speaking, no place in painted ornament, and yet it came to be used everywhere and in all forms, at first cut and rolled like wood and leather work, then twisted into branches shaped like the letter S, and finally tormented into rock-work (*rocaille*) in the Louis XIV. period. Its origin may well be, as stated by Racinet, the shield of the Middle Ages surmounted by the helmet, with the scallop-shell in various forms. Having appropriated the double volute scroll which the Renaissance substituted for the leaf scroll of the ancients, the cartouche became the distinguishing feature of ornament after the first quarter of the sixteenth century, and with its cold, formal, wooden spirals, chilled and degraded the elegant system of decoration derived by Raphael from that study of ancient examples of decorative art which flowered into the arabesques and stuccos of the Loggie and the Villa Madama.

[9] This extravagant use of stucco found its culminating expression at Venice in the works of Alessandro Vittoria of Trent (b. 1525), who with his followers dragged art into the depths of the Baroque style at the end of the sixteenth century. See the stuccos of the ceiling of the Library opposite the Ducal Palace at Venice, and those of the compartments of the ceiling of the Scala d'Oro. The school of Vittoria, in Venetian architecture and sculpture, declared war against the straight line. It violated every law of construction and every sound process laid down for the treatment of form. The hideous excesses of the French Revolution are the only historical parallel in the history of man to the monstrosities of the Baroque style in art, only that the first were in a measure condoned as an outburst of man's wrath against centuries of systematic oppression, whilst the latter had no justification for excesses against which so many fair and noble antecedents silently but eloquently protested in vain.

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an imitation of white marble; and since the art of the Renaissance looked upon the painting of marble as unclassical, and incompatible with the requirements of plastic art, it followed that the application of color to stucco was likewise considered illegitimate. In the beginning, stucco had always been colored or associated with colored decoration, whether it was used upon the wall with painted arabesques, or took the place of the wooden ceiling, with its intersecting beams and rosettes. It then took the form of white ornaments upon a blue ground, similar to the white glazed figures on a blue ground in the terra-cottas of della Robbia; or was partially gilded, especially in rooms to which the artist wished to impart a consecrated or monumental character. Later, however, colorless white stucco prevailed, although for a time it still kept up its connection with painting, inasmuch as its office was to make the transition from painting to sculpture more gradual, and thus to impart a semblance of reality to the events depicted on the ceilings. Taste now accustomed itself to regard the ceiling as a place where decorative effect depended upon relief, and the play of light and shade. It was not, however, possible to place these white ceilings in contact with strongly toned walls, without producing the harshest and most painful contrast, and this brought about a style of painting which has produced most pernicious results in modern times. As all decoration had become a matter of light and shade, it was thought lawful to produce the effect of relief by painting gray shadows next to painted lights. This false decoration, which was used as a poor makeshift in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, has become the rule in all elegant drawing-rooms of our time, and it is considered to be in excellent taste. It would be far better for us to content ourselves with the plain plastered ceiling, which is also one of the results of the use of stucco, for thus, at least, we should avoid the poverty of sham.[10]

How it had been originally treated.

Painted shadows and high lights.

[10] The legitimate uses of plaster for ceilings are well defined by Gilbert Scott, in his *Remarks on Secular and Domestic Architecture* (pp. 56 et seq.). Admitting that it is "the grand vehicle for the abominable and contemptible shamming

This path of art-development has led us, however, beyond the Renaissance, and it is time to return to the Italian dwelling, which we proposed to describe.

Walls, how decorated.

I have said that both the carved and unpainted, as well as the colored and gilded ceiling, presupposed a correspondingly colored wall. I do not mean walls painted like those at the Vatican by Raphael, or others less perfect, though of a similar kind. Such rooms, even when found in private palaces, are fit only for ceremonial purposes. The necessities of convenience, the forms of chamber furniture, which sometimes rose high against the walls, established conditions which rendered a similar style of decoration impossible in ordinary living-rooms, where figure-painting could only be allowed at the height of the frieze from the floor, and even there to a very limited extent in comparison with purely ornamental decoration. This was rarely of such a character as Raphael's arabesques in the Loggie, those lovely creations of the imagination, in which all manner of subjects, boughs and leafage, flowers and fruit, elegant vases, instruments of art, implements of peace and war, garlands and ribbons, medallions and miniatures, are charmingly combined with living creatures, such as fruit-pecking birds, floating butterflies, leaping squirrels, and with masks, caricatures, and fanciful figures of

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which has degraded the architecture of our age," he thus defines its abuses and its uses: "To use plaster in imitation of stone or of wood, in ceilings, roofs, panellings, etc., or for mouldings so designed as to be especially suitable to either wood or stone, is an abomination. Plain ceilings, and plain panels, enclosed by wooden mouldings, also any system of surface decoration without bold relief or heavy projection, are perfectly legitimate in plaster. Plaster ceilings in the Elizabethan style are very legitimately designed, though somewhat too heavy for a material whose weight, if too great, will cause it to break away from the lathing. This may be avoided by using diaper designs in bas-relief as distinguished from panelled designs. So, in cornices, the relief should be such as plaster will readily bear without the aid of wooden bracketing and cradling, otherwise the design becomes inconsistent with the material, which in its very nature is non-constructive. Plaster, which has the great advantage of reflecting light, while wood absorbs it, is adapted to a light system of surface decoration which relieves without unduly disturbing the flat surface of the ceiling, and is susceptible of any degree of enrichment by painting and gilding. It is, therefore, when properly used, thoroughly well suited to the wants of our own day."

CHAP. III.

every description. Mural decoration of this sort found place upon the walls for a time, but it was employed rather in ornamental borders, and to fill the panels of pilasters, than upon large flat surfaces. (See Plate XVI., B.) It was more frequently used upon vaulted ceilings, and kept its place there longest, though with loss of quality, fancy, and thought.

Use of wooden panels limited.

The most common way of decorating the walls of handsome houses, exclusive of wooden panelling, which was much in vogue even in Italy, was by the use of textile fabrics, Gobelin tapestries, and gilded leather. Panelling with wood was not as generally employed in Italy as in the North, nor did it cover the wall so completely. It was not allowed above a certain height, in order to leave room for colored decoration,

Fig. 71.



and in most cases was limited to that of the dado. Nevertheless, it had its peculiarities, which in turn left their impress on Northern wood-work. First of all, as profiles and ornaments had to be changed to suit the requirements of the new art-style, the finials, canopies, consoles, traceries, and all those crisp foliations peculiar to the Gothic, were given up. The division of the Gothic wainscoting, which arose from the uniting of the joints of the vertical planks by strips, so that the oblong spaces were of the same width as the planks, was thereby altered and enriched, for by the use of cross-bands the spaces became of a square shape. In accordance with the feeling that too much relief would be out of place, the sunken panels, if intended to be specially enriched, were decorated with intarsia-work (Fig. 71), — a branch of art which had

Changes brought about by the Renaissance.



WOVEN TAPESTRY.

Middle of 16th Century

flourished in Italy for more than two hundred years;[11] or, where it seemed advisable, were adorned with miniature-like paintings. In Venice the panels of the doors also were sometimes filled with paintings executed by such eminent artists as Palma Vecchio. Carving and sculptured figures in relief were frequently introduced, but far less commonly than in the North.

Genoese and Venetian fabrics.

It is very evident, however, that textiles rather than panellings formed the chief decoration of the wall. (See Plate XVII.) All the most beautiful woven fabrics are known to us by name, especially those produced in the manufactories of Genoa and Venice, such as the monochromatic velvet with its dead ground and outlined flower-patterns, the colored silk

[11] Wood intarsia or marquetry, i. e. wood inlaid with woods of different colors and patterns, was suggested by mosaic work, and applied to the decoration of furniture in Italy as early as the twelfth century. (See Labarte, *Catalogue Duménil*, p. 376.) Up to the fourteenth century black and white inlays of wood, sometimes associated with ivory, only were used; but at the beginning of the fifteenth the pieces were tinted by means of penetrating oils and colors boiled in water, and with these the workers in marquetry imitated foliage, water, and even effects of perspective by the graduation of tones. Landscapes and figures were thus represented, as well as the geometrical patterns originally employed. Vasari mentions many artists of the fifteenth century who occupied themselves in this sort of work, such as Giuliano da Majano; his assistants, Giusto and Minore; his pupils, Guido del Servellino and Domenico di Marietto; and his nephew, the well-known sculptor Benedetto da Majano (b. 1442, d. 1498). This latter artist, whom Vasari speaks of (Vol. V. p. 128) as especially skilful in this branch of art, and of whose skill he cites as proof the inlaid presses still existing in the sacristy of Santa Maria del Fiore at Florence, gave up this branch of work and took to sculpture, for the following reason. Having finished two elaborately inlaid chests for Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, he took them with him to the court of that distinguished patron of art. On opening the box which contained them before the king, he found that the sea-damp had unglued the inlays, which lay in pieces at the bottom. This disgusted him so completely with marquetry, that, after repairing the mischief, he determined never again to waste his time upon work so fragile. Two "intarsiatori" had preceded him at the court of Matthias Corvinus, namely, Pellegrino di Terma, and Ammanatiani called the Fat (*il Grasso*). (See Vasari, Vol. V. p. 129, note 3.) Fra Giovanni da Verona, Fra Raffaello da Brescia, Fra Damiano da Bergamo, and Bartolomeo da Pola were renowned Italian intarsiatori of the sixteenth century. The objects generally decorated with intarsia-work are church stalls and benches, sacristy presses, and various articles of household furniture, such as those large chests (*cassone*) destined to contain rich apparel in the houses of the wealthy.

CHAP. III.

Leather-hangings.

stuffs, the gold and silver brocades, and the pressed, gilded, and painted leather so rich and brilliant in effect. This latter material, which was first brought from Spain and chiefly from Andalusia in the fifteenth century, had become extremely popular in the sixteenth, and was still so in the seventeenth, despite the inferiority of the patterns with which it was decorated. It then declined in favor, as being too severe and too strong to satisfy the gay and trivial taste of the period, and so fell into disuse. In Spain these leather-hangings were not only decorated with ornamental designs, such as colored patterns on a gold ground, or golden flowers on a red ground, but they were also painted with scenes in which large-sized figures were introduced, always, however, upon a gold ground, so that the effect, as many examples yet extant show us, was extremely rich. This was also the case in Sweden, where gilded leather-hangings were more commonly used than in any other country except Spain, and where they are even now not unfrequently to be seen in good preservation in peasants' houses.

General use of tapestries.

Tapestries "de haute lisse," that is, worked with an upright frame, with figure-subjects, such as the "Arrazzi," as they were called in Italy, from Arras, the principal place of their manufacture, and the Gobelins, as they are now called from the name of their French makers, belong to the same category with these silk and velvet stuffs.[12] Of the extent to which they were used, notwithstanding their costliness, both for the temporary or permanent decoration of houses, we can hardly

[12] Jean Gobelen, or Gobelin, a native of Rheims, but of Flemish origin, founded the famous manufactory of tapestry, which bears his family name, at Paris, in the latter part of the fifteenth century. Its great prosperity dates from the year 1667, when, by the advice of Colbert, Louis XIV. united all the trades under royal protection with it, and made the historical painter, Charles Le Brun, its director. This artist was the son of a sculptor, who placed him in the studio of Simon Vouet, the painter, at a very early age. He was afterwards sent to Italy by his patron, the Chancellor Seguier, to study under Nicholas Poussin, of whose influence his mannered and extravagant style shows but little trace. Le Brun is, in fact, the pictorial expression of the theatrical, pretentious, and pompous age of "Le Grand Monarque." The ceiling of the great hall which he painted at Versailles is described in Note 8, Chap. IV.

form an idea at present, when they are known only to the dealer or the connoisseur. Since the last century they have disappeared from the list of modern industrial products, for the so-called tapestries now made are pictures and not wall-coverings. In the sixteenth century, however, they covered the walls of houses in larger or smaller and more or less artistically worked pieces; they were used in the house of the burgher, and by the colored and artistic richness of their effect mitigated its poor and common aspect. Tapestry was then essentially nothing but a wall-covering, like the back-cloths which were hung on the wainscot or behind the benches and chairs. These latter were afterwards turned into furniture coverings, whose designs were adapted to the forms of seats and the backs of chairs, after a French fashion which prevailed in the early part of the eighteenth century. The style of decoration of these stuffs in relation to their use naturally followed the taste of the time and the variations of art. In this respect tapestries adequately replaced mural paintings. In the sixteenth century they also were treated in a high style of art; in the first half of the seventeenth they took their tone from Rubens, and then landscapes, genre pictures, mythological and erotic scenes were depicted. The choice of subjects for tapestries woven for a particular place was determined to some extent by the purpose which it was intended to serve. The Church naturally selected religious subjects, yet she was not so rigid as to refuse to hang up tapestries representing historical scenes on her fête-days. (Fig. 72.) Still less did people trouble themselves as to the character of the designs of tapestries used in their houses, although after the sixteenth century these became more decidedly secular. Those intended for house use were but little scrutinized. Paintings and engravings show us that Gobelin tapestries were regarded like any other wall decorations, and that by a practice which does not recommend itself to imitation, framed oil-paintings were hung upon them with perfect indifference to the fact that their subjects were thus distorted.

Tapestries. Character of subjects treated.

The cause of this impropriety was the not knowing how

Easel pictures.

CHAP. III.

to deal with easel pictures, which in the fifteenth and especially in the sixteenth century were a new element in mural decoration. These pictures being in themselves independent,

Fig. 72.



and rendered still more so by their carved, gilded, blue, or red frames, demanded a fixed place, without regard to the

way in which the wall was already decorated. Thus it happened that where the walls were hung with Gobelin tapestries, picture was hung upon picture. Such overhanging was of less consequence upon figured velvets and silks of one color without patterns, than upon brocaded stuffs and gilded leather, whose brightness extinguished the pictures hung upon them. Since, however, people could not and would not relinquish either the one or the other, they frequently found themselves in a perplexity which is often to be detected in the arrangement of the room. Sometimes the pictures were suspended upon the wainscot, and the upper half of the wall was covered with cloth of gold; sometimes they were hung upon a blank frieze-like strip of the wall, whilst its lower and by far larger part was covered with tapestry. (See Plate XXV., B.) This last arrangement answered very well for life-size portraits, but it removed smaller pictures, such as landscapes and genre-pieces, too far out of the range of the eye, and placed them in false perspective. These difficulties were avoided at a later time by gradually toning down the old wall decoration, by arranging the wall especially for pictures, or treating it uniformly, so that it should be suited to any preferred way of added decoration. Thus modern easel-painting has not a little contributed to changes in the ornamental treatment of walls.

Hanging of pictures.

I have said that the use of tapestries was generally limited to the covering of walls; but an exception to the rule must be made where they were used as curtains for doors and windows, although they were then but a continuation of the wall-covering. It was not then customary to treat curtains so pretentiously as now; they were not cut tailor-wise in ingenious shapes which ruin a material capable of producing a rich effect, nor were they bedizened with tassels, cords, fringes, and other superfluous upholstery. Usually fastened to rods by rings, they hung down to the floor in ample folds, which, whether they were drawn apart or pulled together, had free sweep, giving color and material their full effect, instead of cutting in sharp, unartistic, unnatural, and ugly lines against the dazzling light of the windows.

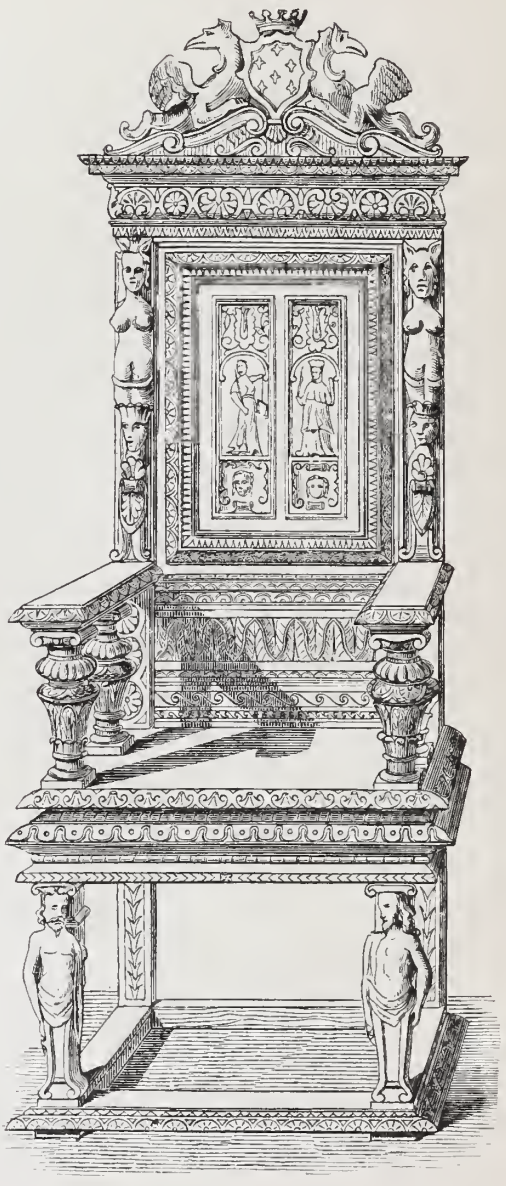
Use and fashion of curtains.

CHAP. III.

Not only tapestries, but all sorts of textile fabrics which served to cover walls were also used as curtains for doors and windows. In handsome houses, and as far as might be in every house, the use of carpets and woven fabrics was pushed to the extreme of luxury. The Renaissance introduced no peculiar element of floor decoration into Italy, excepting carpets, which came into general use at least during the winter, and contributed essentially to give character to the room. It was also the custom to cover tables with heavy cloths richly embroidered in gold and silver, which not only protected the surface of the table, but hung down to the floor on every side. There was consequently no occasion for artists, as nowadays, to decorate the table below the top with carvings and with all sorts of ornate figures in bronze, which tempt the guest, forgetting the rules of politeness and the presence of his host, to gaze under the table. The commercial relations existing between the Italian sea-coast cities

General use of carpets.

Fig. 73.

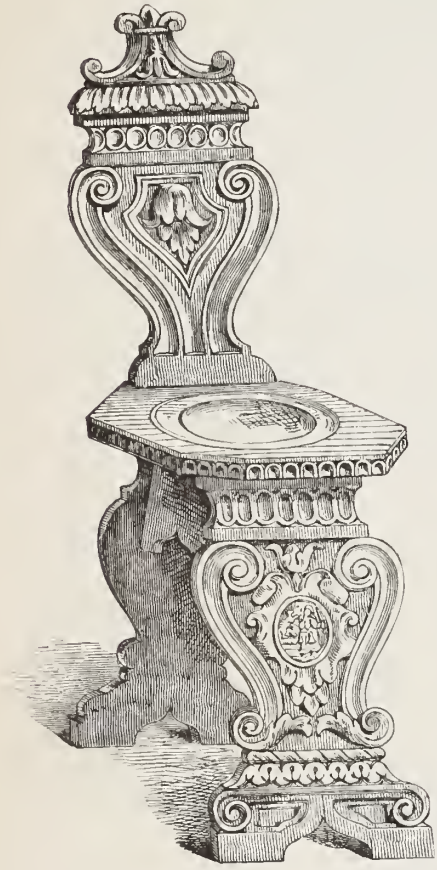




and the East favored the taste for rich carpets and tapestries. It is true that the manufactories of Genoa, Venice, and other North Italian cities produced the costliest velvets, silks, and brocades, which were carried as articles of merchandise to every part of the world, but even the artistic perfection of these fabrics in the sixteenth century could not enable them to compete with those of Oriental manufacture.[13] Every handsome house contained some examples of one kind or the other, either in the form of silken hangings on the walls, or of embroidered furniture and table coverings, or of woollen rugs upon the floors. The taste for Eastern fabrics prevailed in the North, and we may judge how widely spread it was, by looking at the genre-pictures of the Dutch, whose painters introduced Oriental tapestries, with the richest ornamental effect, into their representations of interiors. We find them also in the pictures of Holbein and his contemporaries.

Preference for Oriental over Italian textiles.

Fig. 74.



The decoration of the Renaissance dwelling shows us that not only beauty and rich coloring, but also comfort and convenience were aimed at. The same desire brought about a

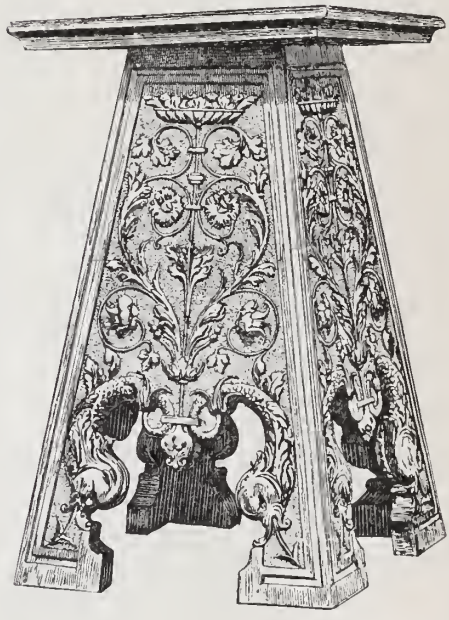
[13] Much valuable information concerning the history and manufacture of textile fabrics is given by Dr. Rock in his Introduction to a *Descriptive Catalogue of Textiles* at the South Kensington Museum, issued by the Science and Art Department. It has lately been published separately in a cheap form.

CHAP. III.

Fixed cushions introduced.

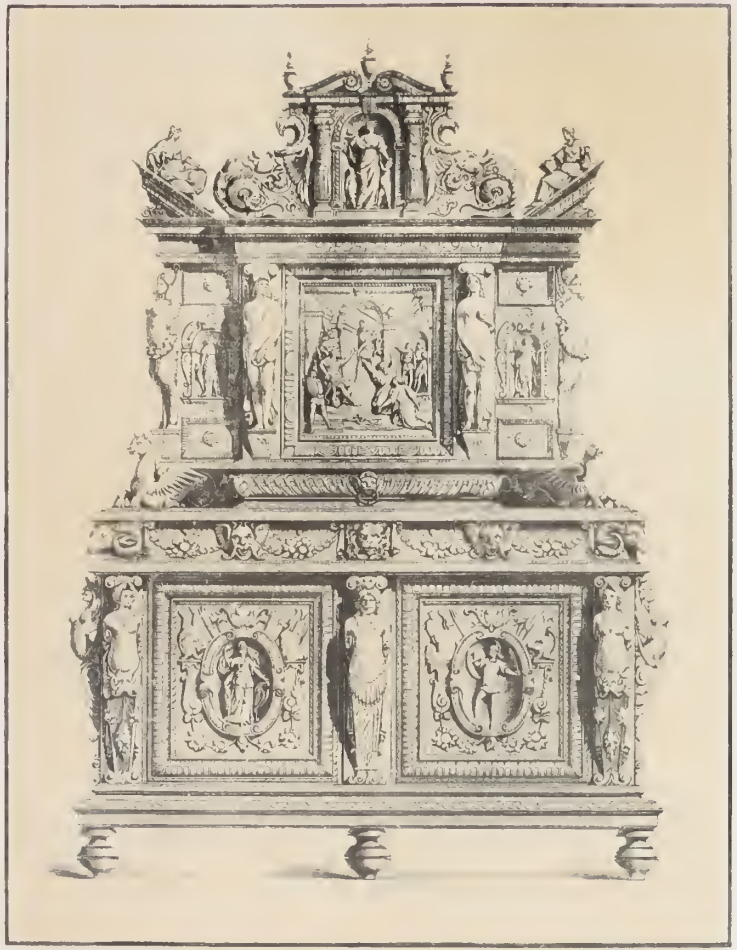
decided change in seats of all kinds, for they were now for the first time provided with fixed cushions; while in the Middle Ages, as we have seen, they had movable coverings, and loose cushions laid upon them. Cushions did not, however, go out of fashion; but, as pictures show us, they were generally used together with and upon upholstered seats. Their coverings were often made of leather, with stamped gold and silver ornaments. Gilded leather-hangings, and in fact all other sorts of wall-coverings, excepting tapestries, were used to decorate chairs.

Fig. 75.

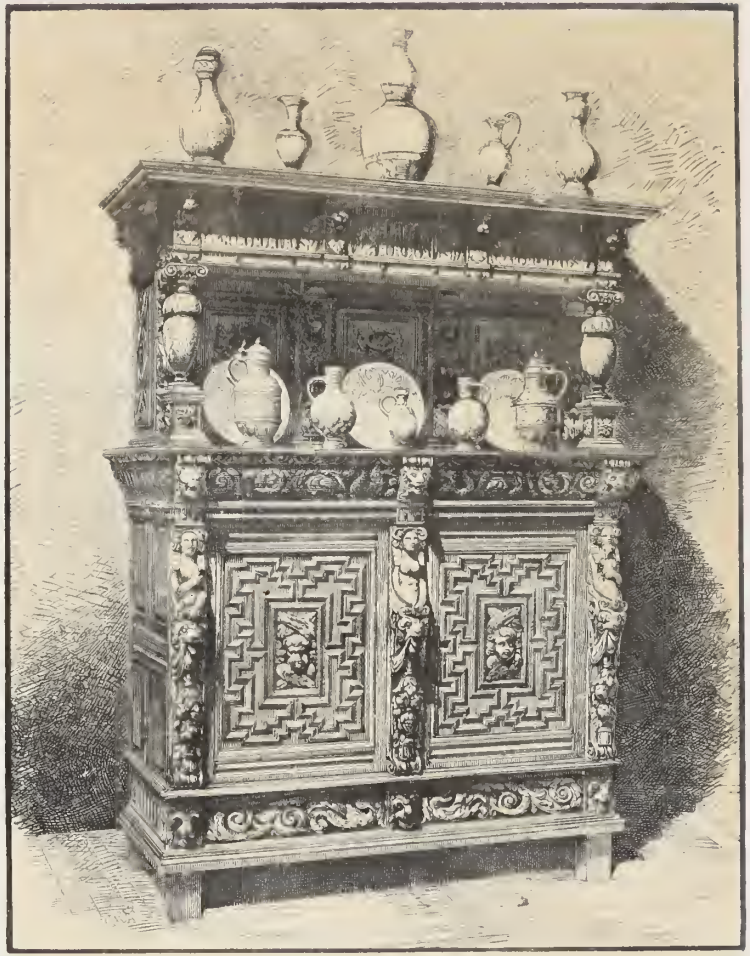


Another change in the nature of seats is connected with this fashion. In the Middle Ages, as we have seen, the chair was seldom used save as a seat of honor. The bench, which was then the common seat, was fastened to the wainscot, or, being made like a chest, was both heavy and unwieldy. The Renaissance freed itself from these conditions, though not at once perfectly. Upholstery induced a more general use of chairs (see Figs. 73, 74, and 75) and sofas, but they did not become universal until the first half of the seventeenth century, when they were lighter in their framework, and therefore more portable as well as more elegant in their forms, which followed the Renaissance style. (See Plate XVIII.) Wooden furniture was decorated with carvings and intarsia-work, — modes of decoration long practised in Italy, which needed only to be modified to suit the taste of the time. Such furniture was also painted and gilded.

Despite the multiplication of chairs, benches continued to



A FRENCH RENAISSANCE CUPBOARD.



B GERMAN RENAISSANCE CUPBOARD.

be very common pieces of furniture in Renaissance houses, where they served the same twofold purpose of seats and chests (see Fig. 76), or coffers, which they had served in the Middle Ages. This latter use of them, especially, is universal in Italian houses. Apart from their artistic decoration, however, such seat-chests lost very much of their original character by being detached from the wall and thus rendered movable; but they kept their accustomed places along the sides of the room, excepting where some other pieces of furniture stood in the way. Numerous existing examples show us that they were elaborately carved on three sides, sometimes with figures, sometimes with ornamental work, often consummately executed. In many cases they were also decorated with paintings and wood inlays. The tops of these chests, which were used to sit upon, were not ornamented and were covered with cushions.

Chairs and benches used simultaneously.

Fig. 76.



The Renaissance treated the cabinet (see Plate XIX., A and B) as it had treated the bench and the chest. It loosed it from its actual and imaginary connection with the wall and the wainscot, and gave it artistic individuality. This it did in such a way that one may say of this article of furniture, with which antiquity was unacquainted, which the Middle Ages had made artistic, but by no means faultless, that the

The Renaissance cabinet.

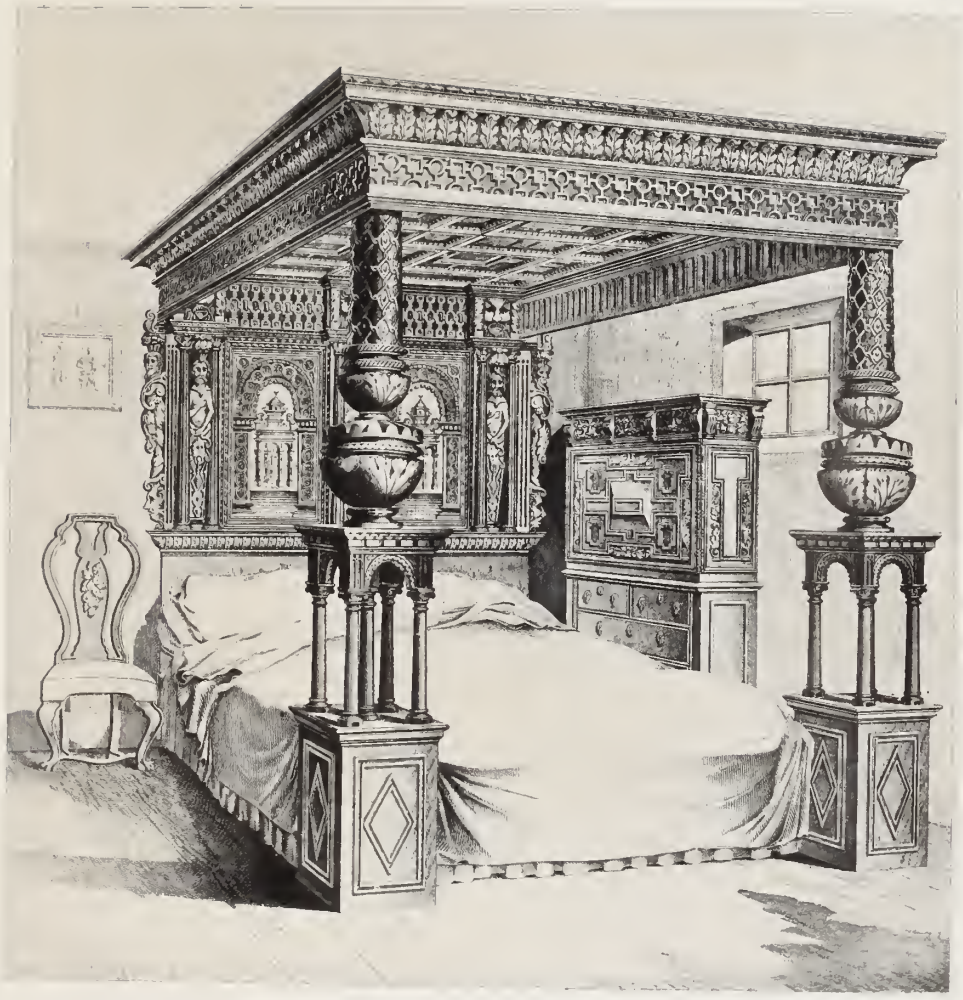
CHAP. III.

Its architectural character.

Renaissance found out and definitely fixed its proper artistic form, and once for all gave it its fitting style. Recognizing the architectural element in it, the Renaissance constructed it architecturally. It borrowed all its structural and ornamental parts from architecture and architectural ornament, such as the cornice, the columns and pilasters, the caryatides, the pendants and festoons; and cleverly adapted all that is purely architectural in it to the new ends which they were meant to serve. It translated all its members and ornaments into a style suited to cabinet-makers' work and wood-work, fashioning them so much more lightly, gracefully, and delicately, that they seem to have entirely lost their stony clumsiness and rigidity, and to have attained ideal perfection. In Gothic cabinet-work the architectural element is used too stiffly and absolutely, as, for instance, where the façade of a cabinet appears to be a direct copy of the façade of a palace; but such misapplication is exceptional. This piece of furniture is wanting neither in richness of form nor variety of ornament, and it is both technically and artistically excellent. Carved work and intarsia, and sometimes miniature-like paintings, give life to its members and panels.

The Renaissance bed and its appliances.

Next to the cabinet, the most important piece of furniture was the bed, which, when the means of the householder allowed it, was always regarded as a work of art and an ornament to the dwelling. (See Plates XX. and XXI.) It retained its canopy, but was freed from the chest-like enclosure with which Gothic taste had surrounded it. The feet were treated artistically, like the feet of animals, or were ball-shaped; the sides, and especially the inside of the raised head-board, were richly carved; and four posts at the corners, either shaped like caryatides or like fluted and twisted columns, supported above their capitals the framework of the canopy, which was of silk or velvet, and was embroidered on the under side. The heavy curtains which closed its four sides were trimmed either with fringes or with Spanish gold-lace. The pillow-cases were embroidered; and as early as the end of the sixteenth century coverlets were spread over

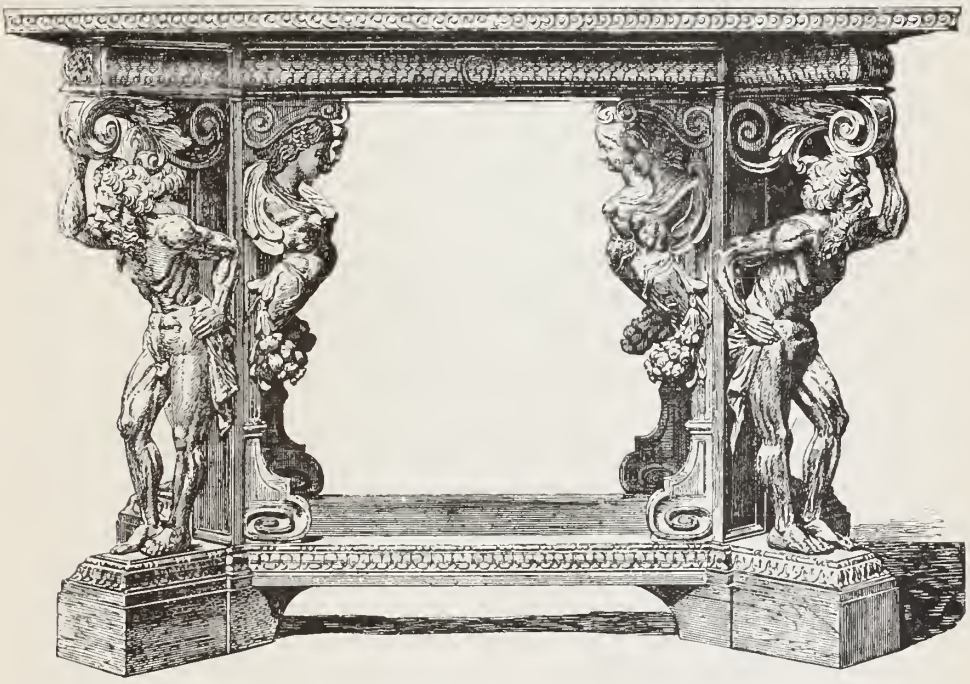


the whole bed made of the costliest lace, and wrought in those regular and yet beautiful patterns, which are commonly called Venetian, although they are due to the general taste of the time rather than to that of any one land or city.

Beauty of the Italian house of the Renaissance period.

If we now picture the Italian Renaissance house to ourselves as it is represented to us in Venetian art, we must admit that, collectively as well as in detail, it embodies the highest ideal of a great art-epoch. We find in it richly

Fig. 77.



carved, gilded, or painted ceilings, walls with sculptured or panelled dados below, and above them Spanish leather, hangings of silk and velvet with patterns in gold and silver, or tapestries rich in figures and colors. Upon them hang the finest easel pictures in frames designed by the artists who painted them, and about the rooms stand sideboards, beds, chests, and cabinets adorned with the most perfect woodwork, together with light and massive seats richly cushioned. Heavy window, door, and bed curtains fall to the floor; tables

and there, an endless variety of smaller cabinets and caskets of wood, ivory, and metal, decorated with the finest carved, chased, etched, beaten, or plated work, comprising, in short, every product of technical skill known to art. Thus, with the help of what remains to us, we can form an idea of the general effect of the house. So rich, noble, convenient, and truly artistic, as the records of the time represent them to us, were the homes of those cultivated men who lived with Raphael and Titian, appreciating their art and enjoying their society; men to whom a world-wide commerce brought all things of beauty which they were so well able to appreciate and to enjoy; men who also took pleasure in intercourse with the learned in philosophy, science, and poetry, and who for variety had recourse to music and the dance, and to delightful journeys through regions remarkable for their natural beauty. If the house and its furniture were worthy of that great art-epoch, so also were those who lived in the midst of such beautiful things. They not only raised art to the highest pitch in their houses and lives, but they raised life itself to the level of an art.[14] (See Plate XXII.)

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[14] With the exception of the age of Pericles in Greece, when culture in its broadest sense reached a height before or since unparalleled, that of the Renaissance in Italy may be designated as a period in which the life of man, in all its phases of manifestation, attained the highest level of refined elegance. Individual cultivation, elegance of style, and refinement of taste were alike the great ideals of Greece in the fifth century before, and of Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries after Christ. Taking Greece as her pattern and model, Italy judged her philosophy, literature, and arts by Greek standards, and rated them according as they approached or fell short of these. So much has been written about the Renaissance and what it accomplished, that it would be hardly worth while to touch upon it here, were it not well always to point out, when opportunity offers, that the reason why the works of that great period are regarded as original, although inspired by those of another age, is, that instead of being directly copied from the master-works of the past, they were fresh developments of the principles embodied in them. These principles had been evolved from nature by men trained in the highest walks of culture. They were principles laid down by the Creator in his works, and therefore belonged to the common heritage of mankind: in other words, they were intended to be used and re-used by men of every age for the working out of results. Such results being national results, stamped with the impress of a certain race and period, cannot be directly appropriated, that is, slavishly copied by another race and in another period, without dishon-

CHAP. III.

The French and German Renaissance.

If, with this brilliant picture in our minds, we cross the Alps to France or Germany, we shall find it repeated in every detail after the Renaissance had transformed Northern art, but with the glory considerably diminished, the lights and colors dimmed. Art is indeed thoroughly alive, but is not upon the same level; learning and culture of all kinds are active; but the first is wasted in scholastic dispute, and the second is one-sided or wanting in refinement.[15] Material prosperity exists, but it is less general than in the South, and luxury has not entered into life as an essential necessity. There were, it is true, magnificent single establishments modelled after Italian examples, such, for instance, as those which the French kings founded with Italian help; there were also

Its artistic inferiority.

esty, and if so appropriated lead to no progress; whereas the principles upon which they are based may be honestly used, as in the Renaissance, for the evolution of new forms, whose derivation need in no wise affect their possible originality.

[15] The problem worked out in Italy by the men who formed the rank and file of the Renaissance was the conciliation of progress with the traditions of the past. This conciliation saved the Roman Catholic Church in Italy as an institution, though it paganized it in a great degree. In Germany, where the clergy was as corrupt, but less enlightened than in Italy, the problem offered for solution met with a solid resistance, and the shock between the two contending parties ended in the Reformation. In Italy, popes, priests, princes, and people vied with each other in fostering that taste for ancient languages, sciences, arts, and philosophy which Petrarch and Boccaccio had awakened in the fourteenth century. In Germany, on the contrary, it met with priestly opposition so soon as it began to show itself, especially on the part of the Dominicans, then all-powerful in the universities. "Blinded by a false zeal, and persuaded that they were serving the best interests of the Church and of truth, the German clergy," says Heinrich (*Hist. de la Litt^re^ Allemande*, Vol. I. p. 389), "undertook the most unintelligent of wars against the revival of letters, whose influence increased day by day. Thus arose a fatal divorce between the humanists and the theologians; between those who gave back to the world the feeling for beauty, which is but one of the forms of the True, and those who preached Truth; unfortunate antagonism which powerfully contributed to render the great crisis of the Reform at once inevitable and irresistible."

As it was the cradle of the Renaissance, the chief repository of the weapons with which its cause was maintained, and the land most deeply imbued with the traditions of the past as well as most thickly strewn with the wrecks of the antique world, Italy profited more than any other country by the revival of letters and arts, so that, even setting aside the opposition which it met with on the other side of the Alps, it is natural that, as Dr. Falke points out in the text, its reflex in Germany should have been pale, — "a reflex with lights and colors toned down, and a splendor for the most part dimmed."



INTERIOR IN THE STYLE OF THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

certain rich and high-minded patrician families, like the Fuggers of Augsburg, who, being really citizens of the world, followed the example of the magnates of Venice and Florence, although they did not build palaces like the Pitti at Florence and the Barberini at Rome, large enough and splendid enough to serve nowadays as royal residences. As, however, after the decline of the Gothic style, the house of a patrician in a German Imperial town retained the same artistic character and general arrangement as before, we need not again speak of it in detail. It was smaller and more insignificant, and artistically poorer, although perhaps more agreeable, comfortable, and home-like. Wainscoting and other wall decorations (see Plate XXIII.), chests and benches, beds and curtains, were alike in the North and the South, bating some artistic differences; but in two respects there was a decided difference between Northern and Southern houses, namely, in the mode of heating and the decoration of windows.

Points of difference between Northern and Southern houses.

As far as the latter point is concerned, painted glass was rather rare in a Southern house, while north of the Alps it still held an important place in house decoration during the sixteenth century. It was to be found, not only in stately mansions, where it softened and harmonized splendor, but also in plain citizens' houses, where it threw a gleam of poetry and romance over bare walls. It was not, however, everywhere used to the same extent, but more especially in those countries which were industrial centres of this branch of art, such as Switzerland, sundry South German towns, the lower Rhine, Holland, and Belgium, whence the small colored panes were exported to all parts of Europe. In style these painted windows differed in every respect from the stained-glass windows of the Middle Ages, whose formative principle was the putting together of small pieces of glass of different colors, mosaic-wise, for the purpose of filling large light openings. These painted windows, on the contrary, which were delicate and fine in character, represented biblical and historical scenes, as well as diminutive landscapes and common objects in the smallest spaces, and more especially the arms

Small painted windows, how decorated.

CHAP. III.

and portraits of the inhabitants of the house, which were inserted as memorials of their birthdays. This pretty fashion, which, in the modest form we have described, is worthy of imitation, unfortunately began to decline in the sixteenth century, and died out altogether in the seventeenth, owing to the continually increasing size of the windows and the demand for clearer and more transparent glass.

The mode of heating peculiar to the North, which formed the second point of difference between the Southern and the Northern house, was not universal, and is not even so at the present time, since the western half of the world on the northern side of the Alps has remained true to the open fireplace (see Plate XXIV.), whilst Germany and the more northern countries have adopted and developed the stove. The stove was not unknown in the Middle Ages, even to some extent in very early times; but the universal acceptance which it met with, and its artistic shaping, date from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and are connected with the advances then made in pottery, especially as to coloring and glazing.

The stove.

Its introduction brought about a not unimportant change in the appearance of the room. Although the stove, like a steadfast, quiet, brave, and economical servant, fills its office and does its duty in the house when it does not show that it is out of order by smoking disagreeably; and although, technically speaking, it represents a more advanced mode of heating, it is not to be denied that, in comparison with the fireplace, which has a certain dignified and poetical character, it is somewhat burgher-like and prosaic. Every one is sensible to the charm of the living, moving light of the flickering, magically illumining flame, around which all the life of the room gathers, to which all eyes are turned, and from which social intercourse emanates. With the stove it is very different. It does indeed diffuse a comfortable and equable warmth through the room, but it exercises little or no magnetism, and if people gather around it they are wont to turn their backs upon it and their faces from it, — a circumstance which is certainly calculated to check genial inter-

The stove compared with the open fireplace.



PAINTED ROOM IN THE TRAUSNITZ.

Near Landshut, Bavaria.

course and the free flow of conversation. Nowadays we try to combine the advantages of the fireplace and the stove in the grate, but it is after all but a poor substitute for the open fire.

Here I must also say a word in favor of the fireplace from an æsthetic and architectural point of view, especially since it has laid aside the colossal dimensions of the Middle Ages, modified its mantel, and reduced the size of its opening, so that from being almost a wall in itself, it has become merely a wall-ornament. When it is well proportioned and adorned with rich mouldings made of white or colored marble, and with ornaments in relief, when it is crowned with a carved or painted pediment, and has a mirror and a variety of charming ornaments upon the mantel-piece, it seems adapted to a higher order of art than the stove, which occupies room-space in an awkward and ugly way, and which, owing to the material of which it is made, can never rise above a low stage of perfection, especially as regards plastic elegance.

But the art of the sixteenth and even that of the fifteenth century strove earnestly to do the best that it could with the stove, considering its shape and material. In old pictures, and in many old rooms which have come down to us, as originally arranged in the sixteenth century, it does not occupy a corner, but projects far into the room, so as to leave a space just large enough for one or two seats between it and the neighboring side-wall. This was the place of honor, where the "house-father" and the older members of the family sat after they had retired from active life, and given over the house and its affairs to their children. It is still so in the dwelling of the North German peasant. Around the stove, that is, around its three free sides, there ran a bench, which formed a sort of domestic centre, although without the cheerful and suggestive charm which belonged to the open fireplace. Its lower half was quadrangular, and rested either upon four feet or upon solid masonry, forming a base out of which a smaller upper half, usually round or hexagonal in shape, rose like a tower.

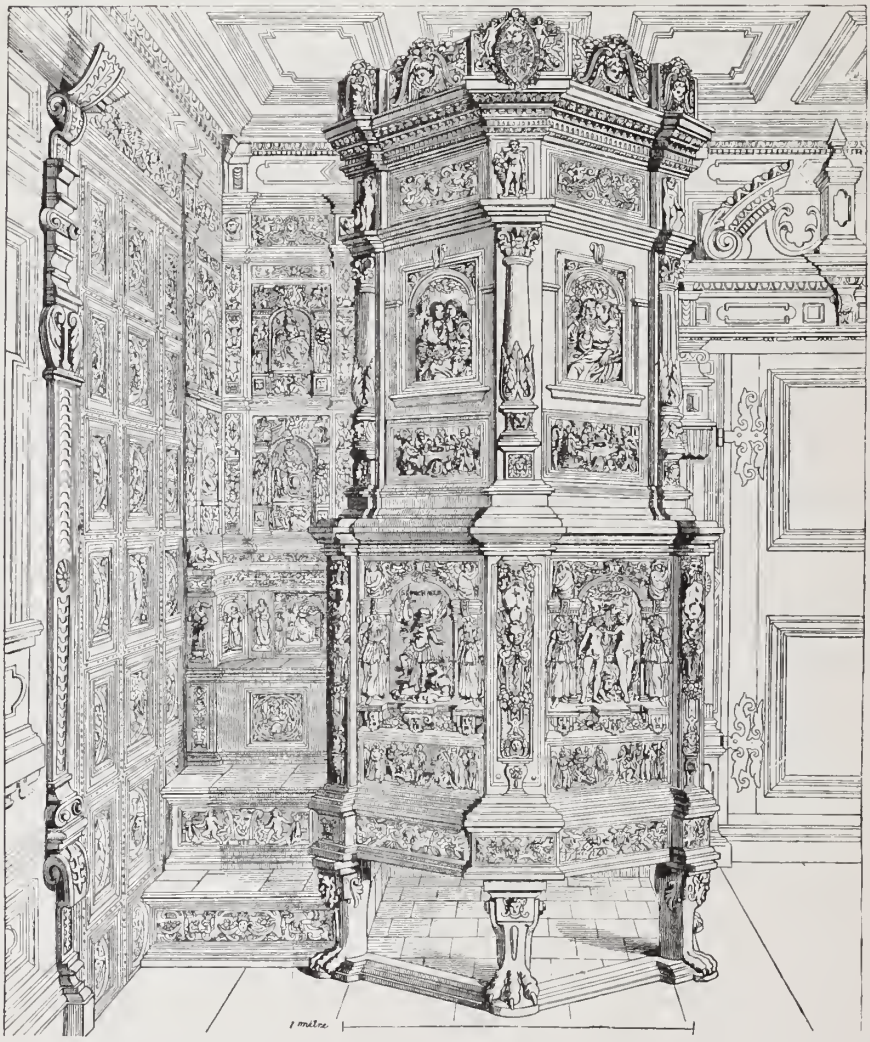
Position of the stove in the room.

CHAP. III.

Its material and mode of ornament.

Originally the material of the stove was almost always green glazed tiles, depressed in the centre, or enriched with tracery or bead-mouldings to give them a more lively effect. By and by, however, a more fanciful style was adopted (Fig. 79):

Fig. 79.



the tiles, some of which were small, some large in size, were adorned with figures (see tail-piece); caryatides were placed at its four corners, and thus the outline became more spirited



FIREPLACE IN THE DRAWING ROOM AT SPEKE, LANCASHIRE, ENGLAND

and artistic. When variegated enamels and glazings came into use, near the end of the fifteenth or beginning of the sixteenth century, the stove became a picturesque object, through the figure-subjects, coats-of-arms, landscapes, and proverbs of all sorts which were represented upon it in various colors. Up to the seventeenth century it offered a tolerably rich field for the display of artistic skill, although technically it never advanced beyond a certain degree of excellence. Its general decorative effect was, however, thoroughly good and strong, and perfectly in keeping with the wainscoted walls and the sober yet warm and cheerful aspect of a wealthy burgher's dwelling. But this very characteristic of grave and deep coloring found no favor with the baroque and rococo taste of later times; and as all strong coloring was then condemned, the stove was covered with white enamelled glaze, or else it was left quite unglazed, and colored with some uniform shade of brown or gray, such as was looked upon as suited to the notions of the time about the harmony of colors.

We have now passed the bounds of this section of our subject, and have entered upon the succeeding period, when French taste was in the ascendant.



CHAPTER IV.

THE HOUSE OF THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES.

The house undergoes important changes.

THE history of the house during the last few centuries has brought us back again from Italy to the countries north of the Alps, where under the influence of Italian taste it lost its mediæval character, and adopted the forms of the Renaissance. This change was, however, by no means so great as that which occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, under the influence of French taste, of the Baroque and the Rococo.

Those which the Renaissance had effected.

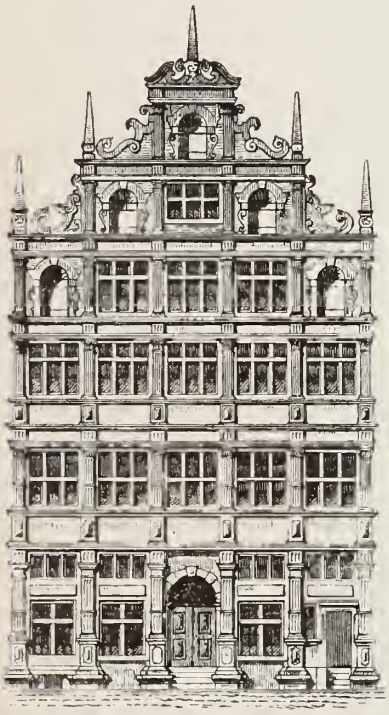
The Renaissance had done away with that harmoniously colored twilight, that sympathetic softness of tone in the house, which it had owed to its narrow, irregular windows filled with colored glass. As there were no longer any practical difficulties in the way of providing glass casements, and they were now universally used, the house was fairly opened to the light of heaven, as the minds of men were opened to the light of the new era, to humanity, knowledge, freedom of conscience and of thought. The whole street-front of the narrow city house was now filled with windows (Fig. 80), and nothing but windows, leaving only enough space for wall and timber to support the upper part. The desire for light was so great, that it would no longer accept those charming glass paintings of coats-of-arms and small pictures, which, as we have seen, remained for a time as bright ornaments among the little panes set in lead.

It is hardly necessary to say that the Renaissance had done away with Gothic forms. It had modified the complicated arrangement of rooms as far as possible, although this was not so easily done in old houses. Chests and seats had been gradually detached from the walls, and adapted to the new style in structure and ornament.

Similarity in general effect.

Nevertheless, although the artistic physiognomy of the house was altered in detail, the general effect remained much the same as before. It retained its sober, massive, harmonious character, which depended quite as much upon its generally sound taste as upon its materials, not then hidden, as in later days, under paper-hangings or bedizened with frivolous finery. In houses of the better class the tone was given by wood left of its natural color, to grow warmer and darker with time. The kinds most commonly used were oak and walnut, which are still considered as best adapted to artistic uses. Sometimes, when the room is entirely lined with wood-work, so that it looks like the inside of a chest (see Plate XXV., A), as not unfrequently happened in the sixteenth century, we are disposed to think that it has too much wood about it. Considering the end in view, there is a superabundance of that which is good, when all parts of the room, mouldings and dividing members as well as panels, are covered to such an extent with carved figures and ornaments worked out in the minutest details, that one's peace of mind is destroyed through fear of breaking or injuring them. But these are exceptional cases, which only serve to

Fig. 80.



Excessive use of wood-work.

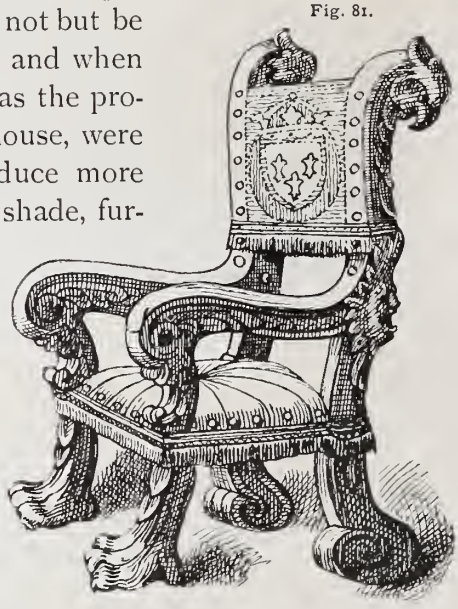
CHAP. IV.

show how highly this intrinsically excellent style of decoration was prized. The bright colors of woven and embroidered curtains and coverings relieved the sombre character of the wood-work, and the house of a simple burgher, as we see it in ancient pictures, has often, therefore, a charm which the artist can only have copied from reality, but could never have imagined. (See Plate XXV., B.)

General character when altered.

This general character changed but little until the second half of the seventeenth century, although taste in matters of art had then begun to decline, and architecture had advanced with great strides towards the Baroque style. Household art could not but be affected by the same causes, and when the structural parts, as well as the profiles and ornaments of the house, were exaggerated in order to produce more striking effects of light and shade, furniture could not escape similar treatment.

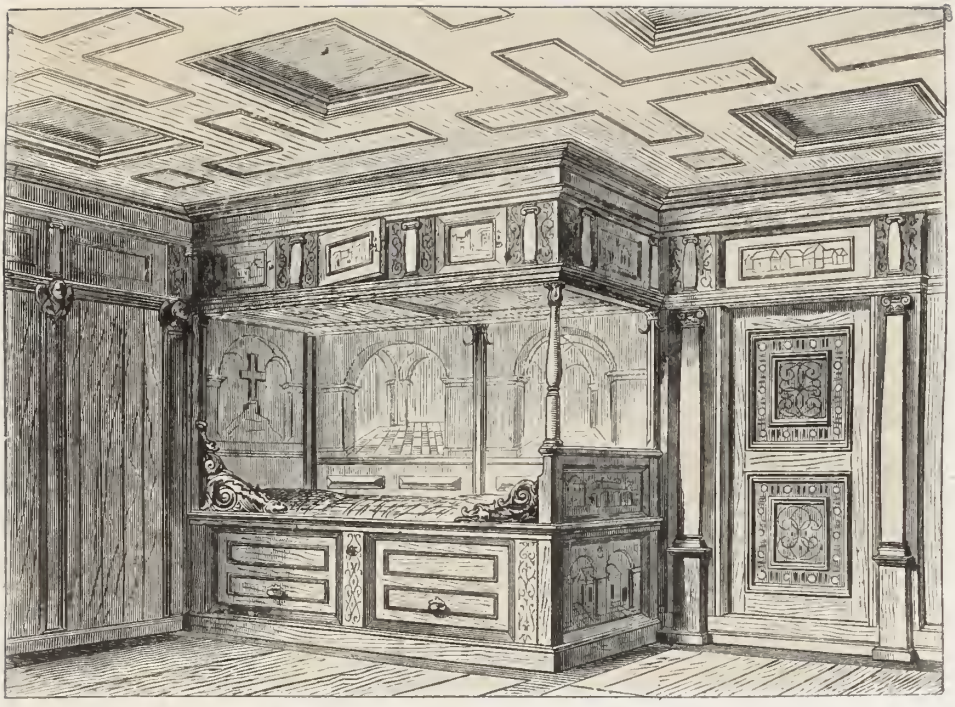
Fig. 81.



Style of furniture.

Almost all the wooden furniture of the first half of the seventeenth century has an exceedingly massive, even a clumsy character (Fig. 81), especially that of the Dutch, as we learn not only from genre-pictures, but also from the original designs of Vriedeman de Vriesse, Crispin de Passe, and others.[1] The

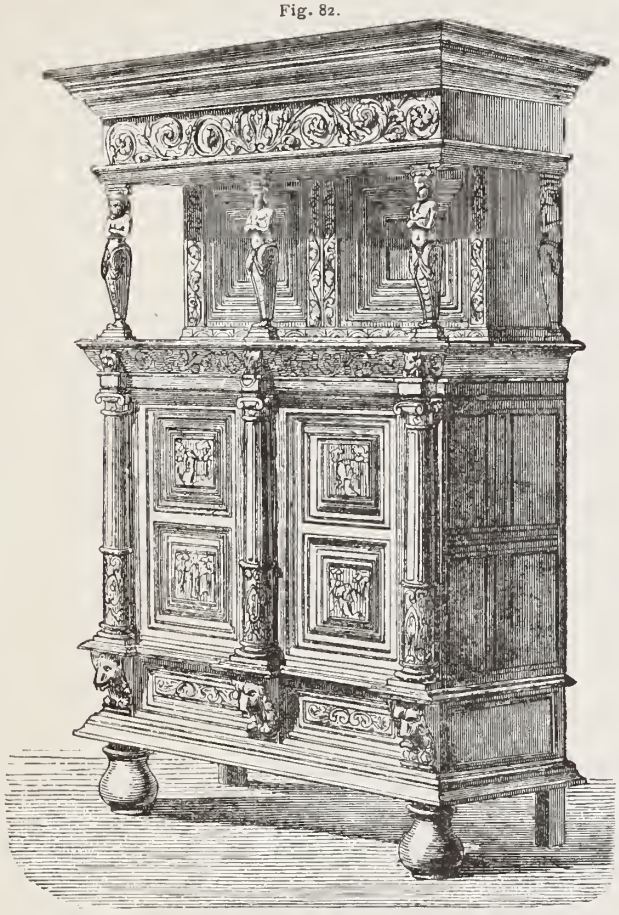
[1] Hans Vriedeman de Vries, painter, designer, and architect, grandfather of Paul Vriedeman Vriesse, de Vries, or de Vriesse, was born at Leeuwarden in Friesland, A. D. 1527, and died at Antwerp after 1604. He published seventeen designs for furniture, entitled "Different portraits de menuiserie," also seventeen plates of ornamental designs; five plates of trophies, "Panoplia" (1572), engraved by Gerard de Iode; a book of designs of cenotaphs, "Pictores, libellum varias cœnotaphiorum," etc. (folio 1563), engraved by H. Cock; sixteen plates of caryatides, etc., engraved by G. de Iode; twenty-one plates of canals, courts, and interiors engraved by H. Cock (1562); four plates of architectural designs engraved by H.





same may be said with equal truth of French furniture of the time of Louis XIII. The constructive principle of the furni-

Fig. 82.



ture of this period is good, but its architectural element is too architectural in its suggestion of façades, and also in its Abuse of architectural forms.

Wiercx; eight plates of views in perspective (perspectivische Aussichten); thïrteen ditto of architectural compositions; eighteen plates of fountains and gardens (1568) and six of pleasure-houses with gardens.

His descendant, Paul Vriedeman Vriesse (born 1630), referred to in the text, published many designs for carved furniture, panels, etc., in the Elizabethan style, and of a heavy character.

For designs by this artist, Crispin de Passe, Serlio, and other noted furniture-makers, of the reigns of Louis XIII. and Louis XIV., see *Decorations intérieurs et meubles*, par L. Adams. Paris, 1865.

Crispin de Passe, the elder, born at Ar-

CHAP. IV.

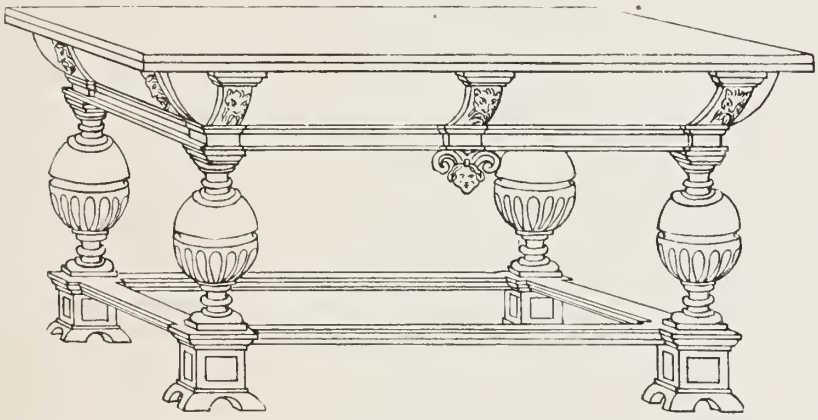
members. (Fig. 82.) We find table-tops supported upon arches and rows of Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian columns, constructed in strict proportions as laid down in the numerous treatises upon architecture then current. A table was made like a small hall, and a cabinet like a house.[2]

muyden in Zeeland in 1560, settled at Cologne in the early part of the seventeenth century, lived long in France, Holland, and England, and died about 1629. His designs for furniture are similar to those of De Vriesse, but less heavy. A Flemish carved oak bedstead inlaid with marquetry of colored woods, dated 1626, in the Kensington museum, Cat. 4034.56, is said by Pollen, op. cit. p. 4, to be of his designing. He designed figure panels, garlands, etc. See Pollen, op. cit. Int. p. ccxxv., also the catalogue of the K. K. Oesterr. Museum, p. 39. Nagler Monogram. II. 625 and 795. He published designs for goldsmiths' work, ornaments, costumes, figures in landscapes, etc., etc. Crispin de Passe, the younger, who flourished about 1670, followed his father's profession, and attained almost equal celebrity.

[2] So long as it was not pushed to an excess, the architectural character given to furniture during the Gothic and Renaissance periods, and for a hundred and fifty years after, i. e. up to the year 1700, was commendable; but where, as in England during the Elizabethan period, the façades of cabinets were made like house-fronts, and their doors when opened disclosed looking-glasses set in the walls, and paved floors; and also whenever construction, which is the only sound basis for decoration, was concealed by artificial appliances intended to deceive the eye, it was reprehensible. During the Renaissance period, French sculptors of renown, such as Jean Goujon (1515–1575), and architects, such as Philibert de l'Orme, designed furniture with the elegance which distinguished their work in their special arts. The history of furniture, like that of architecture and costume, assumes a new interest if we study its changes in connection with those in ideas, manners, and institutions. M. Ch. Louandre, in an article on "Le Luxe dans l'Ancienne France" (*Rev. des Deux Mondes*, 15 Mai, 1876), points out in a concise manner the intimate relations which have always existed between fashions and social changes in France. He traces the persistence of antique civilization in the Gallo-Roman types, followed in architecture, costume, and furniture up to the fall of the Carlovingian dynasty; shows how Gothic buildings, and the monk-like costume of nobles and plebeians, faithfully reflected the domination of ecclesiastical over civil society during the Middle Ages; and finds an equally strict parallel between the eccentricity of dress and furniture in which the French indulged from the reign of the mad king, Charles VI., down to the reign of Francis I., who brought the classic taste of the Renaissance across the Alps, and thus checked the prevailing extravagance. In all things, small and great, belonging to the reign of Louis XIV., M. Louandre sees the expression of a national will prostrate before an absolute master, and under those of Louis XV. and XVI. the characteristic refinements of a shameless coquetry. These disappear during the Revolution, which breaks up social inequalities, destroys many good as well as bad things, and delivers France from all tyrannies save that of fashion, of which, as in the time of La Fontaine, we may still say, "C'est proprement le mal français."

Even where the imitation of architectural forms was less absolute, the members, such, for instance, as the legs of the tables, are unnecessarily heavy and massive (Fig. 83), although rich in their outlines; and the feet, which during the Renaissance were light and slender or a little pointed, in order to make the table appear as if it could be easily moved, are broadly and clumsily shaped, like the feet of a turtle, or are replaced by a chest-like base. (See Fig. 84, p. 132.) In consequence of this the furniture looks as if it grew out of the floor, or had been built upon the ground like a house, just as in the later Middle Ages it looked as if it were a part of the wall. The Baroque style of ornament unfortunately added to all the

Fig. 83.



heaviness, the overloading, and excess of ornament then in vogue, that knob and peg work which, although it originally belonged to the wooden ceiling, now began to play a fatal and inconvenient rôle under the table.

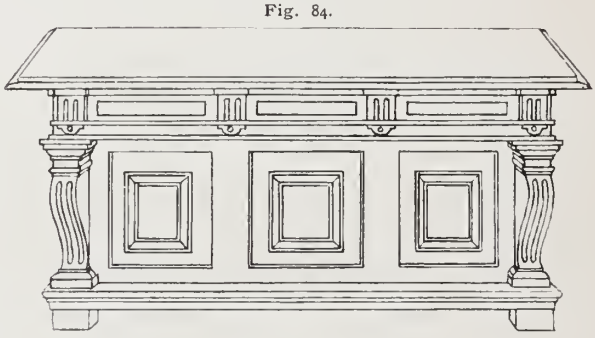
Despite this generally Baroque character of furniture, there are numerous exceptions which tradition saved from falling into clumsiness of shape and excess of ornament, and in these the really sound principles of construction are so much the more striking. Such objects often seem to be excellent patterns for imitation, and we may at least take very valuable hints from them as to design, and this all the more as this period showed itself to be especially inventive of new ideas

Furniture not always clumsy and overloaded.

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for furniture. The original designs of Vriedeman de Vriesse and Crispin de Passe for "buffets" (see Fig. 85, p. 133), sideboards, and cabinets suited to the display of works of art, abound in varied and for the most part beautiful forms. In the Netherlands, which was then the chief northern centre for the manufacture of rich furniture, another kind of ornamental woodwork was made, both for use in that prosperous country and for exportation, which did not altogether agree with the projecting and strongly profiled framework. This was wood-intarsia, or marquetry[3] (see Fig. 86, p. 134), of which many admirable examples had already been produced in Italy. The headquarters of this branch of art were now transferred to Holland and the Lower Rhine, as also to Augsburg and Nuremberg, where it was soon contaminated by the taste of the Rococo[4] period, and died out with it. But in the first half of the seventeenth century rich and charming marquetry-work was produced in Holland and Germany, with which tables and presses, as well as the frames

Fig. 84.



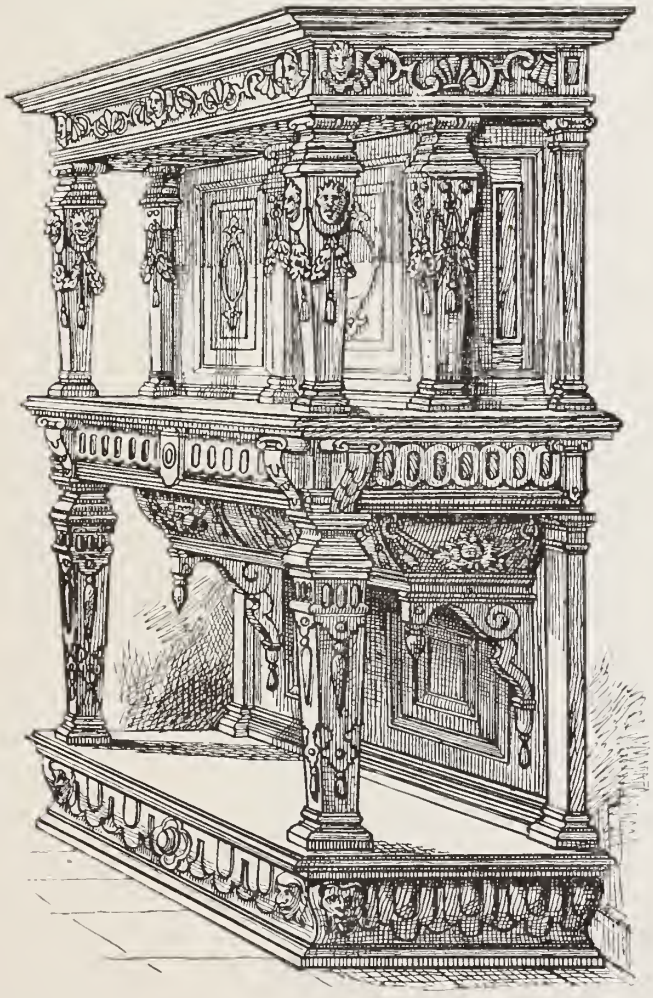
Marquetry extensively used.

[3] Marquetry (see note 11, Ch. III.) became the leading feature of furniture decoration in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Portugal, when sculpture in wood declined. It was little known in England till late in the seventeenth century. During the reign of William and Mary, Dutch marquetry furniture became the rage. Among the English cabinet-makers of the last century, whose marquetry had a national character, were Robert Adam and his brother James, 1728 – 1792. In France, the famous architect and engraver, Jacques Androuet du Cerceau (1505 – 1585), published designs for marquetry; and in the eighteenth century David Riesener (b. 1730), his son Henri François, and David Roentgen, a native of Luneville, distinguished themselves greatly in this sort of work. Their Italian contemporary, Maggiolino, was also a celebrated worker in marquetry. Certosina or Carthusian work is a species of marquetry which consists of dark wood, ivory, and white metal laid in geometric patterns.

[4] The term "Rococo" is derived from "rocaille" and "coquille," rock and shell work.

and panels of doors, were adorned. Even the walls were covered with graceful variegated ornaments in marquetry, such as flowers, birds, and other animals, interspersed with human figures. Landscapes, buildings, and genre or historical sub-

Fig. 85.



jects which, though quite unfit for the purpose, were often represented in Italian marquetry of the second half of the sixteenth century, are less commonly found in that of the North.

CHAP. IV.

The chair preferred to the bench.

Seats, among which the chair was more decidedly preferred to the bench than ever before, show the same admixture of the good and the objectionable. It was then that the wooden seat now called the settle came into use, and chairs with stiff, obliquely inserted, turned legs (see Fig. 87, p. 135), and backs made of a single piece of wood, overloaded with Baroque or fantastic carving, the "ne plus ultra" of hardness and discomfort, especially when, as sometimes happened, the seat also was carved. Besides these there were a great number of small stools without backs, whose legs were made of two planks pierced with Baroque ornamental patterns. Among the designs of Vriedeman de Vriesse, which were doubtless often made use of, are those extremely stiff-looking arm-chairs, carved, or rather carpentered (see Fig. 88, p. 136), and not upholstered,

Fig. 86.



whose straight backs, towering high above the head of the person sitting in them, resemble the gable of a house-front.

Other kinds of seats.

Besides these we sometimes find seats of quite another sort, which might serve us as models of construction and style, if not of proportion. They figure extensively in the genre pieces of such painters as Terburg and Metzu, and in the perfectly characteristic interiors represented in the engravings of Abraham de Bosse, and are also known to us through many extant examples. Though straight-lined, they are upon the whole broad and easy, except that the seat is made a little too shallow, perhaps to accommodate the huge top-boots trimmed with lace then worn by men. The posts of the back of the chair, which do not rise above the head of the sitter, and often end in a fringed knob, are generally wound round with a broad

stripe of the same stuff with which the seat is covered, while the seat rests upon four carved or turned legs, either crossed or bound together by wooden cross-pieces. (See Fig. 89, p. 137, and Fig. 90, p. 138.) The wood is oak or walnut, sometimes stained black, and the covering is of velvet or of heavy silk set off by a gold fringe, or of leather, either pressed or cut with charming ornaments in the Spanish style, which is commonly both colored and gilded, and fastened with large brass nails.[5] This chair is a stately piece of furniture, massive in style, and well constructed, free from all poor, petty ornament, and remarkably simple. Perhaps on this very account, through its really excellent shape and its costly fittings, it produces an impression of aristocratic dignity, which, although it does not renounce comfort, is yet ready to sacrifice all unseemly ease.

Fig. 87.



Taking the materials, the shapes, and the coloring into consideration, we have no difficulty in comprehending the

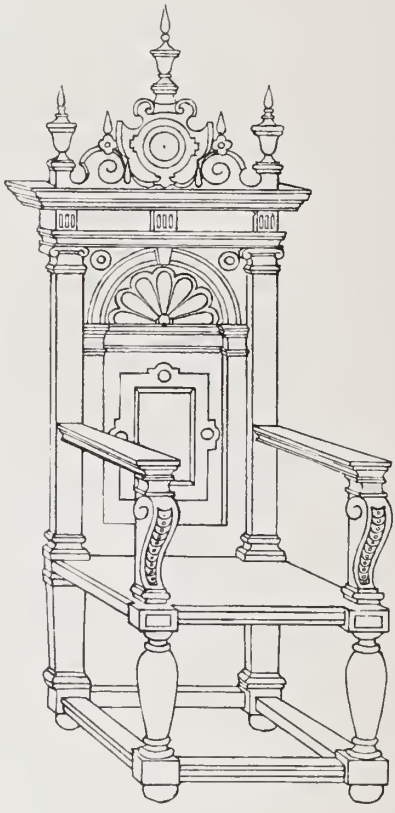
Agreeable and artistic aspect of interiors.

[5] Chairs were covered in Portugal and Spain, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with thick leather, "cuir bouilli," stamped and fastened with large brass-headed nails. See Fig. 91, p. 139. Colored and gilded leather was also used to cover walls.

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agreeable and thoroughly artistic impression which the interiors of that time, as we see them in pictures, with their furniture and decoration, make upon us; and this, although the architectural style and all that immediately depended upon it were already thoroughly Baroque. The artists themselves seem to have understood this fully, as they took care to soften the effect by picturesque means. They perfectly understood how to treat chiaroscuro, twilight tones, and the mysterious depth of shadows, combined for the most part with a concentrated effect of light, penetrating from without. They liked to put a rich Oriental carpet in the foreground, either on the floor or hanging from the table, so as to make an opposition to the single-toned brown or almost colorless wall; but above all they loved to let that greatest of magicians, the golden sunlight, play about the room, as it does in the masterpieces of Peter de Hooghe, and thus to brighten the scene, throw over it a veil of poetry, and fill it with comfort and joy.

Fig. 88.



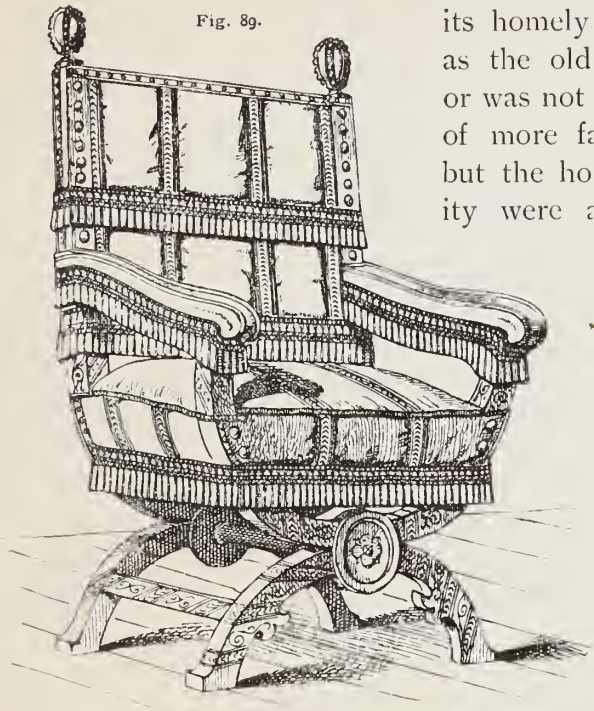
Close connection of art with reality.

Here, certainly, art and reality were closely connected; for when art ceased to deal with such charming subjects, they disappeared also from life, or rather the reverse, because so soon as another taste in art prevailed and did away with the picturesque in the dwelling, it faded also from the picture, because the eye of the artist saw it no longer in reality. This change took place in the latter half of the seventeenth century, under the influence of French taste, which then obtained

Ascendency of French taste.

the ascendency. The burgher's house, with its solid furniture, which had been handed down from generation to generation, still retained much of its homely comfort so long as the old furniture lasted, or was not replaced by other of more fashionable shape; but the houses of the nobility were adapted in every particular to the new style, which strove, on the one hand, after excessive convenience, and, on the other, setting aside solidity, constructive excellence, and modest ornamentation, tended to cold magnificence and outward show. If the artistic character of the dwelling-house in the sixteenth century, such as the Venetian, for example, could be called stately and warm, that of the seventeenth must be characterized as stately and cold; and both these properties, which are sometimes so inseparably associated in our minds as to be almost identical, have clung to palatial residences and elegant drawing-rooms up to the present day.

Fig. 89.



A French writer tells us that when the Marquise de Rambouillet, the founder of the modern *salon*, decorated her new hotel,[6] she discarded red and brown, which had been up to

The Hôtel de Rambouillet.

[6] The Hôtel de Rambouillet was situated between the Louvre and the Tuileries. The celebrated Catherine de Vivonne, wife of Charles d'Angennes, Marquis de Rambouillet, who presided over it, was the daughter of the Marquis de Pisani, one of the most eminent diplomats of the latter part of the sixteenth

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that time the universal colors, and for the first time ventured to furnish her drawing-room in blue. This blue drawing-room has become famous in modern history, although it may be doubted whether it really was the first so decorated: the story, nevertheless, contains a general historical truth, if not one of special application. After the middle of the seventeenth century, — when the Hôtel Rambouillet had already existed several decades, — cold colors, and especially blue, began to take the place in France of such warm colors as browns and reds. Strong tones of color were still applied, for taste during the reign of Louis XIV. being by no means over-delicate, favored vigorous effects and striking contrasts. Colors grew pale in the course of the eighteenth century, when a love for the pretty prevailed with the Rococo style, and taste became correspondingly enfeebled; then dark blue was exchanged for light blue, golden yellow for sulphur yellow, red for rose, and even these tints were subsequently washed down and subdued, until they faded

Fig. 90.

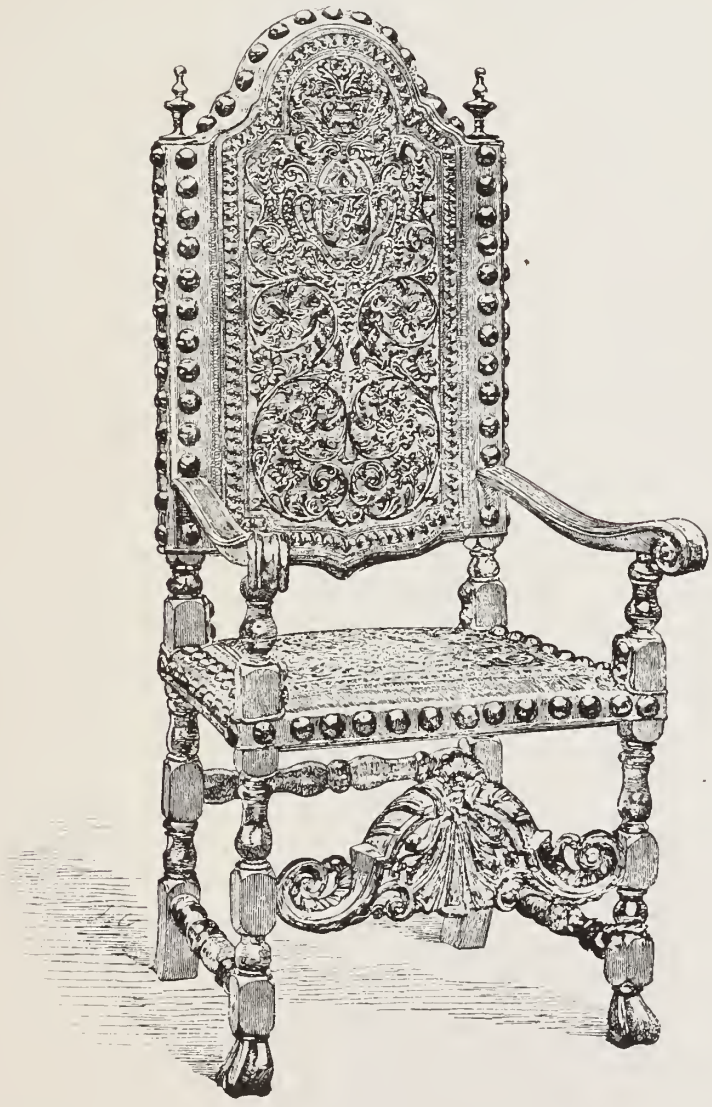


Pale colors preferred by the eighteenth century.

century. Her "salon bleu," referred to in the text, where she reigned under the poetical surname of Arténice, was frequented by the most eminent men of letters and wits of the time, who were treated on a footing of equality hitherto unknown in social relations between them and persons of high rank. "How can we wonder at the influence of the Hôtel Rambouillet," says Henri Martin (*Hist. de France*, Vol. XII. p. 124), "upon all who read and talked in France, if we consider that to review the society which frequented it, is to review, if not the entire literature of the period, at least all that which accepted the requisitions of good company?" Mme. Mohl gives an account of this famous "salon" in her life of Mme. Récamier, the Marquise de Rambouillet of the nineteenth century.

into white or pale gray. At the same time a general and very significant preference was shown for silver instead of gold, both for ornaments and mouldings. Stucco then came

Fig. 91.



into fashion, and taste accepted the ceiling of dead-white plaster with its gray shadows, whence it spread to the walls,

the wood-work, and even to the doors and window-frames. Wood, which grows darker and warmer and more beautiful with time, could not be allowed to retain its natural color when the walls had thus been whitened. It was therefore in a certain way made to look like stucco by a coating of white oil paint, or like stone by the addition of a light gray marbling, as if marble doors were especially practical or beautiful. For the same reason furniture was painted white, as also because it could be cleansed by washing, or repainted with but little trouble when that seemed desirable.[7] The best specimens of wood-carving upon the doors and walls of many old houses and palaces have thus been covered over and concealed from sight, if not absolutely obliterated, by repeated coats of paint. In the end, the only bits of color left in the drawing-room were the silken furniture-coverings and Gobelin tapestries, wherefore, in order to produce some effect of contrast with the white walls, and to satisfy the desire for splendor, it became necessary to gild ornaments and mouldings very richly, — a mode of decoration of whose value and effect we shall speak in another place.

Universal whiteness in vogue.

This general paleness, this coldness or renunciation of color, was only one feature of the change wrought in the decoration of the dwelling by the ascendency of French taste, which equally affected material and ornamentation, and the latter both in form and subject. As we shall by and by have occasion to speak of the decoration of great audience-halls, of which the most remarkable example of this period is the hall painted by Le Brun in the palace of Versailles,[8] I shall not

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[7] Under Louis XV. wood-work was adorned with stucco or painted white and gilded. Towards the close of his reign, panellings, frames, etc., were gilded in white gold (gold alloyed with silver) or in red gold. Furniture carved with wreaths of roses, garlands of wheat, etc., richly gilt, was in fashion during the reign of Louis XVI.

[8] The ceiling of the hall at Versailles decorated by Le Brun is composed of seven large and eighteen small compartments, containing paintings illustrating the events during the reign of Louis XIV. from 1661 – 1668. The subjects are treated in Le Brun's theatrical, mannered, pompous style, which so well expresses the character of Le Grand Monarque's court. The hall is lighted on one side by seventeen tall arched win-

say anything about them now. The decoration of these halls, moreover, belongs entirely to the domain of high art, in which the old traditions of the great Italian masters — the combination of architecture, sculpture, and painting — still act as a living force, although the style and the working out of the details are subjected to the taste of the period. I shall at present confine myself to the rooms which were actually used for domestic and social purposes.

Decoration of living-rooms.

In these rooms we are at the outset led to remark that wood-work is less and less used for decoration; or, when used, it is painted in light colors, and thus loses both its wooden character and color. Wood-work was not entirely banished from the room in the eighteenth century, but it was restricted to the dado or to the doors and window-frames. Sometimes it was left of its natural color, in which case the ornaments were gilded. Where, however, the decorator desired to employ plastic ornament, he made use of stucco or of marble, which in the North served only to give the room a still more frigid aspect.

Wall-coverings.

On the other hand, the use of woven stuffs for wall-drapery was continued, and the manufacture of Gobelin tapestries received a fresh impulse, although they were used for another and more limited purpose, when, in the reign of Louis XIV., under the influence of Colbert, the state took possession of the manufactory of the brothers Gobelin, which had been

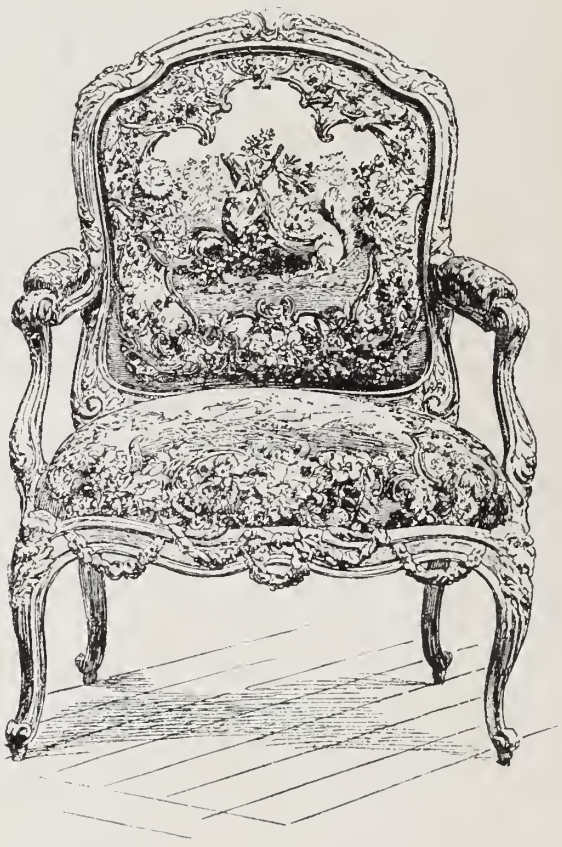
dows separated by pilasters of the composite order, and decorated on the other with arched recesses, filled with mirrors. Above the entablature of gilded stucco are cartouches, and trophies of various figures, which cover the arcades. Trophies, children holding garlands, and tablets containing pompous inscriptions, cover every part of the vast arched ceiling, excepting that occupied by the pictures. Profuseness in the use of ornament was never carried to a greater excess than here. It was in this gallery that Louis XIV., seated on a throne of the richest description, raised upon a Persian carpet having a golden ground, and surrounded by his generals and the high personages of his court, gave audience to special embassies, such as that of the Cardinal Imperiali, who came by order of Alexander VII. to make his humble excuses for the insult offered to the French ambassador at Rome in 1662. Here also court balls and fêtes took place, as in December 7, 1697, on occasion of the marriage of the Duke of Burgundy and the Princess of Savoy. (*Versailles ancien et moderne*, par le Cte A. de Laborde, pp. 239 *et seq.*) See also Henri Martin's *Histoire de France*, Vol. XIII. p. 288.

CHAP. IV.

founded in the sixteenth century. In former times every piece of this kind of woven work, whether the pattern were ornamental or figured, was considered fit for wall-decoration, and could be hung up anywhere about the room as a back-cloth. This custom, however, went out of fashion. The use was now more absolutely fixed. The little pieces which were especially made for the purpose were fastened to the seats as coverings (Fig. 92), and the larger pieces were framed and set into the architectural divisions of the wall. As at the same time technically the most perfect, picture-like execution of the objects represented was aimed at, which before had only exceptionally been done, the cost of these products was so much enhanced that only the rich could have them in their houses, and thus the dwellings of the burghers lost what had been to them a quickening and warming element. The case was yet worse in regard to leather-hangings, which were still much used in the seventeenth century, although changed in the character of their ornamentation. This consisted of a shapeless, lawless wilderness of architectural members interspersed with flowers, scat-

Effect of increased value of textile fabrics.

Fig. 92.





LEATHER-HANGING.

17th Century.

tered over a gold ground. (See Plate XXVI.) The eighteenth century tried at first to soften their effect; but concluding that leather-hangings were too solid a mode of decoration for its refined taste, soon gave them up altogether.

Various materials used.

The plain patterned fabrics of silk, velvet, and woollen did not fare so badly. The two last were indeed less in vogue in this century than silk, and cotton, a rival of the baser sort; but in general the house could not dispense with woven stuffs, although they were used for the most part in rooms such as the boudoir, the private sitting-room, and the bedroom, which represented the genial side of life. Smooth and supple silks, principally in light tints, were invariably preferred to heavy woollen stuffs and to dark, shadowy velvets; and where silk was too expensive, cotton took its place as a cheap substitute. Linen fabrics with printed patterns had already supplied a cheap material, and now the same experiment was made with cotton; but as soon as the art of giving it an artistic gloss was discovered, chintz, which is a material exactly suited to every style of ornament and every shade of color, even to that of the softest flower-tints, came into use, and supplied the long-desired substitute for silk. This also was not enough; people wanted to have something still cheaper and more comfortable than chintz, and they found it in Chinese paper-hangings, upon which cotton-print patterns and those of the simpler sort of textiles could be impressed. Thus paper-hangings came into use in the eighteenth century. They are certainly a very good substitute for stencilled wall-decoration, and as such have now very properly taken its place; but they transgress their limits when they attempt to imitate construction by means of shadows and artistic perspective, or when they try to rival pictures, especially those in which figures appear. Both have been attempted. We find, then, that in this period the change in wall-decoration, as far as material is concerned, was not inconsiderable; but that which concerned the formative side of ornament was still more remarkable. In the early part of the reign of Louis Quatorze extremely heavy forms were in fashion. (See Plate XXVII.)

Chintz and wall-paper.

Style of ornament during early part of the reign of Louis XIV.

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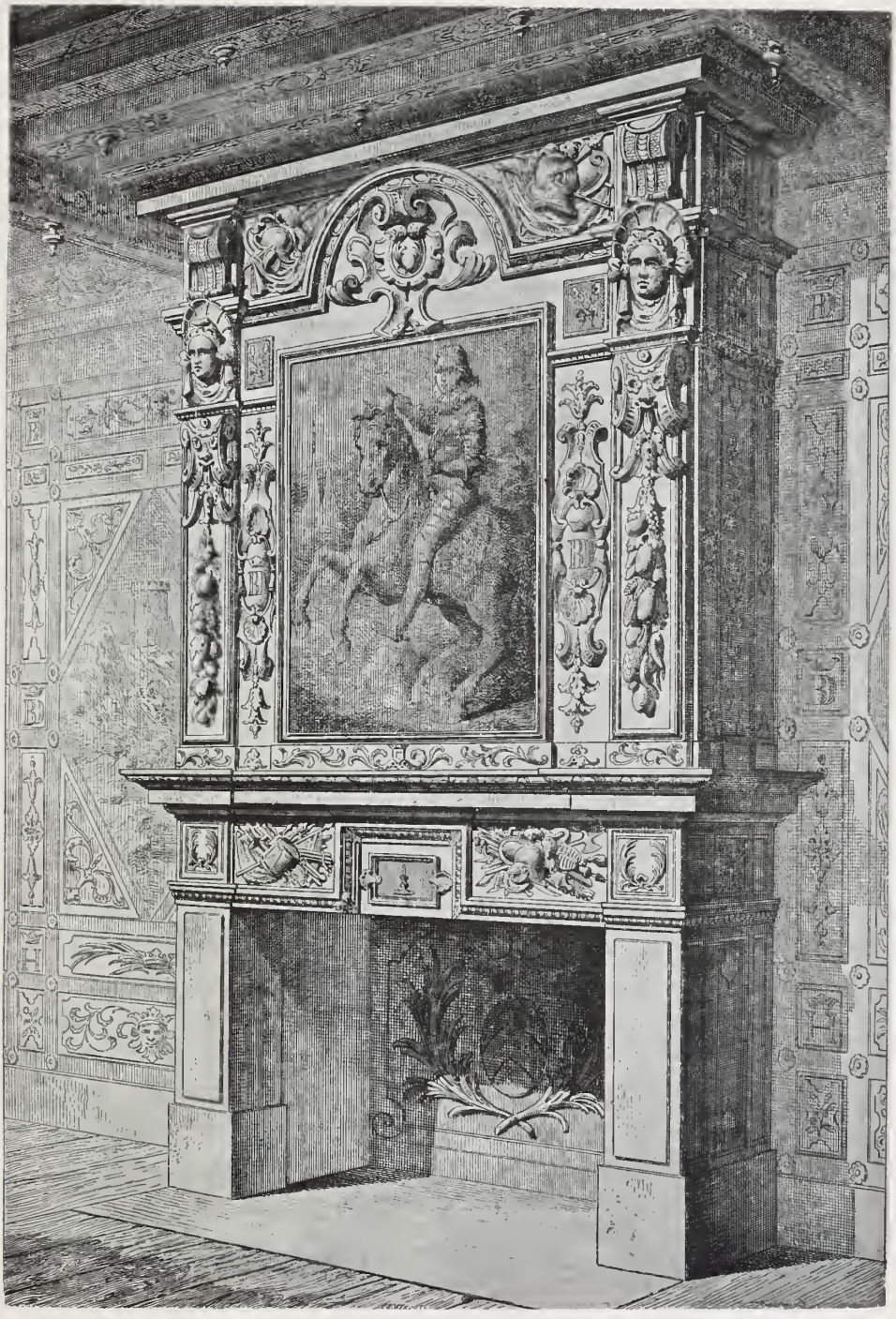
The style of Jean Lepautre (1617–1682), the first ornamentist of his time, as shown in his fireplaces, doors, mural designs, friezes (Fig. 93), panels, etc., belongs wholly to the later Renaissance which rested on a Roman basis, but it is beyond measure clumsy, massive, complicated, and overladen. His rolling acanthus-scrolls make one dizzy; they do not roll, they rush. The children and animals, the hunting-scenes and combats, with which these volute scrolls are enlivened, are all in the most extreme state of unrest, in wild and tumultuous motion, possessed with the spirit of strife and storm. Everything in the panels is crowded and thronged, and the small framed pictures vanish in an ornamental wilderness of figures, animals, and all kinds of objects which surround them. The colossal marble statues beside the chimney-piece tower by half their height above the mantel, or are planted upon it to support a picture-frame upon their shoulders. It is an uncouth art which, wherever it appears, squats down heavily and clumsily.

Fig. 93.



Extravagance in style subdued.

This overcrowding and extravagance was indeed given up during the latter part of the



reign of Louis XIV., as it was wholly unsuited to the stiff and ceremonious etiquette of the time. But though its ungoverned nature was certainly tamed, its lawlessness did not disappear. In point of fact, this was raised to the dignity of a principle, and reduced to a system, during the Rococo period. What had been straight was now bent and broken; what had been angular was rounded, not, however, in regular curves, but in irregular waves. That which had been and was symmetrical by nature was reduced to a shape in which right and left, top and bottom, no longer corresponded, but were designedly made unlike.

Rock and shell work.

This newly constituted ornament, one of whose chief and characteristic forms was that of the shell,[9] with its irregular curves, sharp points, and indentations, naturally influenced mural decoration. The French taste of this period, having adopted the Renaissance principle of construction, favored a certain organization of the wall into divisions defined by stucco fillets and frames, and adapted to the proportions of doors, windows, and chimney-pieces. (See Plate XXVIII.) They were shaped in an irregular manner, and their corners were decorated with ornaments of a corresponding character. The panels or spaces thus produced were filled with ornament in the style of the time, which in the course of the eighteenth century made a constantly increasing use of graceful flower-festoons copied from Chinese patterns. Especially conspicuous were the spaces above the chimney-pieces and over the doors, for which single pictures were the favorite ornaments.

Important part played by decorative painting.

During the prevalence of this style, and even in the eighteenth century, decorative painting played a much more important part than at present, when it has degenerated into stencilling and wall-paper painting, or has been entirely superseded by easel-pictures. The artists who designed the decoration of

[9] Bramante used the shell as an architectural ornament on a gigantic scale. In one of his sketches it serves as the vault of an entire chapel. Michelangelo, who ignored the whole field of ornament derived from the vegetable world, adopted it gladly. He introduced shells of six feet in diameter upon the buildings which he designed for the Capitoline at Rome.

CHAP. IV.

state drawing-rooms were by no means the worst; and when we have once made up our minds to accept their style, with their feeble yet still delicate and pleasing color, as well as their subjects, we must admit that they did much that was beautiful and admirable. They painted upon plastered walls or upon silken stuffs, whose shining lustre gave a brilliancy to their pictures which was very appropriate to their subjects. These subjects, which were also suited to the rooms which they adorned, idealized real life. The artist painted the soul of society, and that soul was love; but love without passion, or consuming fire, or tragic issue. Art, like the society which it represented, asked only for gayety in life; it transformed everything into an idyl — gods and men, itself, its aims and doings. Amorous gods, playful children, billing and cooing doves, languishing shepherds, fond lovers, — such were the subjects painted over doors and mantels, which spread thence over the whole wall, enlivened its arabesques, formed part of the frames of its pictures and mirrors, and finally covered every article of furniture in the room.

Changes in the eighteenth century.

With the latter, that is to say with furniture, no less fundamental changes had necessarily taken place; for those forms of the Renaissance which the taste of the Low Countries in the first half of the seventeenth century had especially adopted, were on the one hand too heavy and clumsy, and on the other too regular in construction. For the first-named reason, those tall wall-cabinets, adorned with carving or marquetry, which had hitherto been the pride of the dwelling, were now banished to the antechambers and dressing-rooms, and in the burgher's house perhaps to the bedroom. They could not be allowed to cover up the new wall-decoration, and their grandeur was out of harmony with the lightness of the new style. Social life, as then newly organized, could perfectly well dispense with them in living and reception rooms. Tables and chairs were multiplied to take their places; and if a cabinet was needed, the low pier-cabinet or the bureau with drawers (see Fig. 94, p. 147), whose use belongs entirely to modern times, took its place. Of this kind of furniture belonging to the

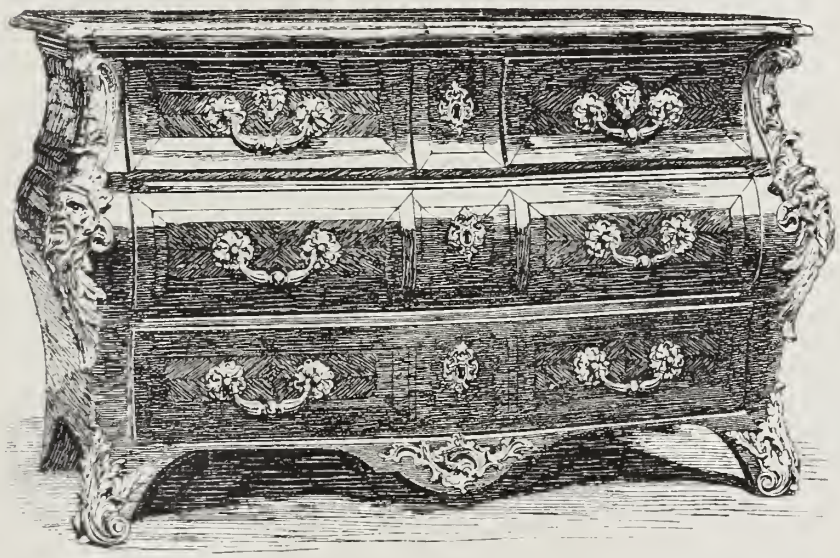
The cabinet.



FRENCH CHAMBER ROCOCO STYLE

last century, so much has been preserved that I need only call attention to the manner in which curved lines influence its whole shape, to its wood-work inlaid with Rococo ornament, and to the bronze-work at its corners, locks, and handles, which gives it an especially brilliant effect. The same ornament in marquetry and bronze extended to tables, and as their tops were chiefly covered with the former, the colored cloths, which, as we have seen, had played so very ornamental a part in the room, became superfluous, or rather out of place, because, if used, they concealed another kind of ornamental

Fig. 94.



decoration. As the table-top was intended for use, but little stress had been laid upon its adornment in former times; now, however, the cold marble table-top, which is not favorable to comfort or convenience, came into fashion.

Crooked wood-work.

Still more remarkable was the change in the construction of tables and chairs, all whose bearing and supporting parts were curved and crooked instead of being straight. (See Fig. 95, p. 148.) This being contrary to the nature of wood, which depends for its strength upon the straightness of its growth, its adoption renders furniture more fragile, both ap-

parently and really, and cannot therefore be considered as promotive of beauty. Another result followed, which was only possible with curved lines. In the second half of the seventeenth century an effort was made to adapt the shape of the chair to the newly awakened demand for greater ease and comfort. In the time of Louis XIV. seats were made lower than before, and the backs higher, so that they rose above the head. On this account also the legs had to be made heavier.

Fig. 95.



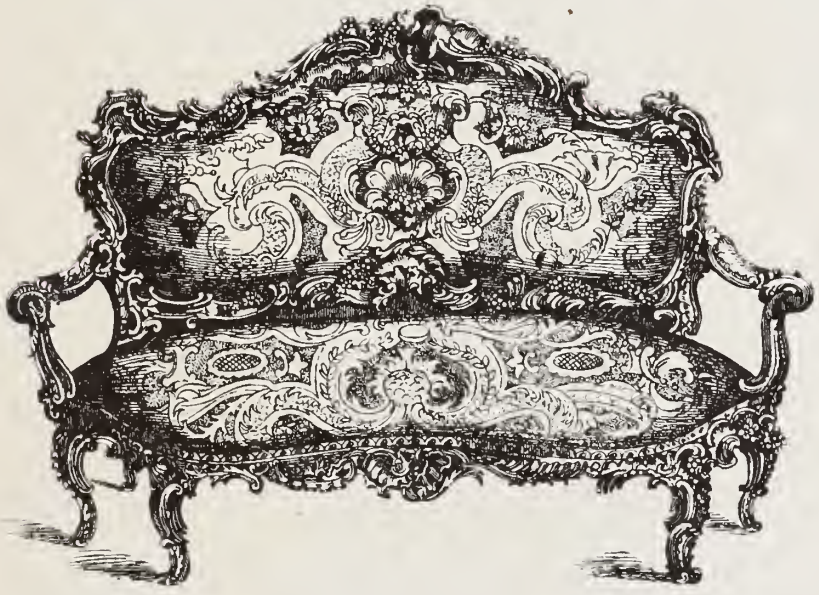
So-called Gothic chairs.

Chairs thus took the form which they often have in modern dining-rooms, and which in the phraseology of our cabinet-makers and upholsterers is called Gothic. This form, both with and without arms, was handed down to the eighteenth century, but it was much too stiff for the social requirements of the Rococo period, during which people gave the body the utmost possible ease, so that the spirit might take a free and

unconstrained part in conversation. The curved lines to which wood was subjected helped this end. A good upholsterer could give any desirable shape to a chair-back, and stuff it so that it should fit the form and support the weakness of the human spine. The arms of chairs also were crooked; the low seat was already in use, and only needed to be made broader and deeper and well upholstered to become the modern "fauteuil" (see Fig. 92, p. 142), that ideal drawing-room chair. It attained its full development in the first half of the eighteenth century. The sofa (Fig. 96) was

Origin of the fauteuil.

Fig. 96.



perfected in the same way, as we have seen, out of the old coffer-bench, although in its Rococo shape it never attained the luxuriousness, the artistic attractiveness, and the apparently natural form of the Oriental divan, as its slender curved legs and narrow arms were too slight and weak in comparison with the width of its seat and back. The color, material, and pattern of the sofa-covering were modified to suit the new taste of the time, as I have already shown. I have also pointed out that it became the favorite place for the display

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of Gobelin tapestry, and that the seats and backs of sofas were adorned with framed genre-pictures, mythological scenes, and landscapes. This fashion did not make the seat less comfortable, and it suited the æsthetic taste of the time, which had no respect for law, and welcomed every bizarre fancy.

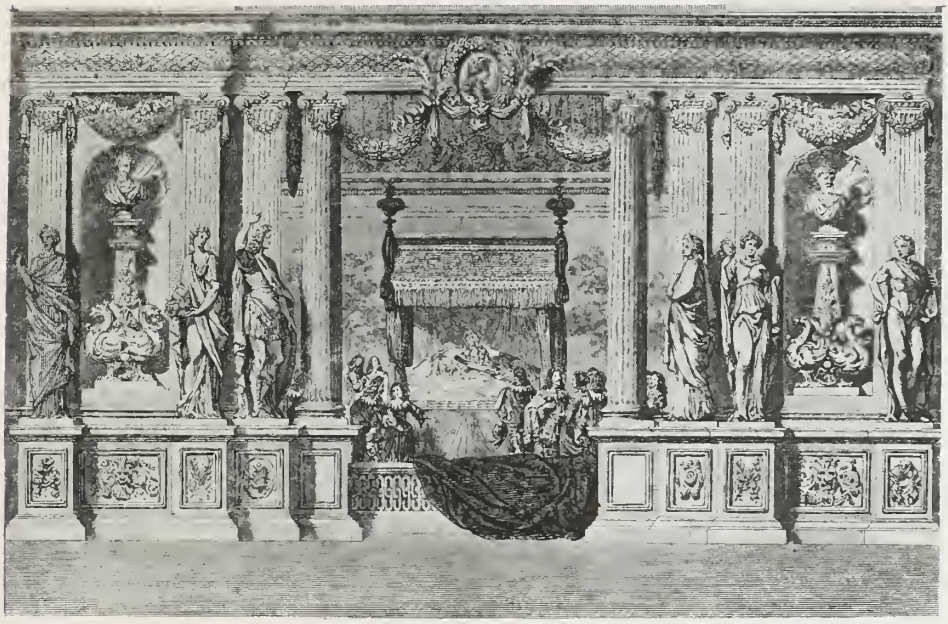
With this change in the fashioning of chairs, an element of ease and comfort which had vanished in the seventeenth century, under the influence of French taste, was restored to at least a part of the house. It is indeed remarkable, though not at all incomprehensible, if we consider it on historical grounds, as connected with the culture of the time, how cold, bare, and empty, state and reception rooms became, particularly in the second half of the seventeenth century. The reason for this lies not only in difference of color, or in change of style, but also in that while the walls and ceiling were enriched, the rest of the room was little cared for as regards furniture, of which the removal of the carved chest is an example. The ceremoniousness of the court allowed little or no use of chairs; at the utmost, a few tables with marble or other richly decorated tops were allowed in state apartments, and these rather for show than for use. As this rigid etiquette penetrated deeper and deeper into society, it exercised a similar influence upon ordinary reception-rooms.

Bareness of state and reception rooms.

Nor did the wide-spread use, which people began at this time to make of crystal and mirror glass, tend to lessen the generally cold effect of the house. At first, a single mirror[10] over the chimney-piece replaced the customary picture, — a

Glass mirrors and chandeliers.

[10] Glass mirrors were first made in Venice in 1318. In 1507, two glass-workers at Murano, named Andrea and Domenico, obtained from the Council of Ten a twenty years' patent for the making of mirrors according to a method of their invention. In 1564, the glass-workers at Venice formed a guild. In France, where mirrors became the chief element of room decoration under Louis XIV., Colbert established a factory in the Faubourg St. Antoine, for looking-glass flint plates. In 1686, workmen were brought from Murano, and settled at Tourlaville, near Cherbourg. Glass-making was introduced into England as early as 1555. In 1670, the Duke of Buckingham brought over foreign glass-workers whom he established at Lambeth. See Pollen, op. cit. Int. p. cxxxv.



A [illegible]



B FRENCH SALON STYLE LOUIS XVI

fashion which has not unreasonably been continued until the present time. Subsequently mirrors were set in the wall, and at last the room was completely surrounded by them. Under certain conditions, such as brilliant candlelight and a numerous and animated company, such a mode of wall-decoration has a kind of magical effect, but it totally unfits a room for common use. The evil was not diminished when, as sometimes happened, vases and pendent wreaths of flowers were painted upon the mirrored wall. Crystal chandeliers with their glittering reflections, and especially those made of multitudes of small bits of glass cut in facets, which took the place of the nobly formed brass chandeliers of the seventeenth century, harmonized perfectly with this system of decoration. Through their influence form, to whose perfection Venetian chandelier-makers still paid great attention, was neglected, the one object aimed at being a dazzling effect of light.

The salon and the boudoir of the seventeenth century.

Not only state apartments, but even those specially ladies' rooms, the "salon" and the "boudoir," were as late as the eighteenth century markedly cold and empty. This does not seem strange when we reflect that drawing-rooms were at that time either under the dominion of court etiquette or of that pretentious literary pedantry which Molière has satirized in his comedies. During the reign of Louis XV. intellectual freedom was restored to social intercourse. Under his predecessor the salon was disgraced by an unseemly custom which had its origin in Spanish alcoves, and was thence transferred to France. A balustrade, which supported pillars reaching to the ceiling, ran through the middle of the room, dividing it into two parts. In one of these, which was called the "ruelle," a name which had been similarly employed before, a state-bed was placed, upon which the lady of the house received her guests in a reclining posture. (See Plate XXIX., A.) Her intimate friends only were admitted into the ruelle,[11] and it is commonly reported that, owing to the

The ruelle and its uses.

[11] Furetiére says the name of "ruelle" is given to alcoves and decorated places in which ladies, either in bed, or seated, receive visitors. Poets read their works

CHAP. IV.

scarcity of chairs, the gentlemen used to throw their cloaks on the floor to sit upon. Among Lepautre's etchings there are several designs for this disposition of the salon which, although condemned in some quarters, as, for instance, at the Hôtel Rambouillet, was tolerably prevalent.

The aspect of the salon and the boudoir had changed completely in the middle of the eighteenth century, — when Rococo and "causerie" were at their height. Instead of being too empty, these rooms were then rather overcrowded; for the Rococo period is the period of trifles, and with trifles of every description the rooms overflowed. Among them were statuettes upon "étagéres," and gilded bronze groups of an amorous character standing upon pier-tables and on either side of mantel-piece-clocks, before mirrors in which they were reflected. Branch candlesticks of glass, porcelain (Fig. 97), and bronze were fastened to the walls; and consoles were placed in the corners and upon the wall-panels, on which stood pretty bright-colored figures of Chinese and Saxon porcelain. Portraits of ladies in over-soft pastel colors looked out smilingly from richly carved and gilded frames, so that wherever the glance turned it met no void, but lighted upon something to delight the eyes, awake the fancy, and enliven conversation. In considering the boudoir and sleeping-room and their technical treatment, we find, judging by the numer-

The bedroom and the boudoir in the eighteenth century.

"dans les ruelles pour briguer l'approbation des dames." They were nests of gossip.

> "Les coureurs de ruelles
> Savent hier mieux les nouvelles
> Qu'un rimeur disaient."
>
> LORET, Tom. VIII. p. 56.

An engraving by Abraham Bosse shows that playing and eating went on in the ruelle. At a time difficult to fix, the name of alcove was substituted for that of ruelle. The alcove, says M. de Laborde (*Le Palais de Mazarin*), is the "ruelle encadrée." Loret calls it "la chambre à balustrade." The balustrade remained, "et la dévanture avait de chaque coté une porte pour conduire dans l'espace appellé plus anciennement la ruelle." *L'alcove* comes from the Spanish *alcoba*, and this from the Arabian *elkauf*. A description of the alcove in which the celebrated literary society of the Hôtel de Rambouillet met is given by M. Valckenaer, in his memoirs of Madame de Sevigné. Madame de Rambouillet was the first person who found such réunions in the alcove "peu séantes." Her guests listened to readings and literary discussions outside the balustrade and the columns, in the chamber itself.

ous engravings of the eminent masters of that time, that the insinuating and mysterious charm of *chiaroscuro*, so conspicuous in the interiors of the most famous Dutch genre-painters, must have been given back to them. The rich and artistically arranged drapery about doors, windows, and beds shows us indeed that this charming twilight effect was aimed at with a certain coquetry. Coquetry and refinement are indeed the characteristics of the time. Carpets lie upon the floors, and cloths hang from the tables; toilet-stands and mirrors above them are draped, and laces are spread over them to soften their color and temper the daylight. All is soft, delicate, full, and flowing, most cunningly devised to minister to easy and luxurious enjoyment, which is already in need of artificial means to stimulate it. To give the finishing touch, it is necessary that the fire should blaze in the fireplace around which the small circle of intimate friends gather, so that the delicate colors of the chamber — the sky-blue, the lilac, light green, pale yellow, silver-white, and pink of the brocaded stuffs then in fashion — may be lit up with the warm glow in which they are otherwise so sadly deficient. (See Plate XXVIII.)

Fig. 97.



Thirty years later, somewhere about 1780, when the Revolution was rapidly approaching, a great change had again been effected. It is true that when we read of the furniture which Marie Antoinette ordered for the Petit Trianon which

Changes brought about before the Revolution.

CHAP. IV.

she loved so well, of the blue silk furniture stuffed with eider-down and covered with silver embroidery, and the couches buried in white silk lace, we feel as if we were still in the very midst of the Rococo period; it is spirit of its spirit, coquetting with the delicate and the graceful, but without much fancy, without earnestness, similar in character to that which we found in the boudoir of 1750.

The Grand and the Petit Trianon.

But in spite of all this, it was quite a different form of art which fashioned the Petit Trianon, as well as so many other elegant apartments decorated in imitation of that unapproachable model. Royalty had become burgher-like, and craved privacy and retirement. Louis XIV. himself had felt the need of occasionally laying aside pomp and magnificence, and so built for himself a lesser Versailles in the Great Trianon, and afterwards at Marly. Louis XV. wanted something smaller still, and built a Petit Trianon in opposition to the Great Trianon, where he hoped to close his days in the society of his friends.[12] The name of Trianon did not, however, become generic until Louis XVI. presented this Little Trianon to his wife, Marie Antoinette, who chose it for her favorite abode, where she could sometimes forget that she was

[12] The Grand and the Petit Trianon. "The Grand Trianon, or Palais de Flore," says Madame de Sevigné, was originally a pavilion at the end of the park of Versailles, where flowers and fruit-trees were cultivated, and where royal collations were often served. Within, it was lined with mirrors and porcelain tiles. Vases of porcelain decorated the exterior. On the spot where this pavilion stood, Mansard was asked by Louis XIV., in 1668, to build a palace in the style of an Italian villa. It was begun and finished in 1671. The new palace served, like the old pavilion, for the collocation of the finest plants, flowers, and fruits. It was, says M. de Laborde (p. 496), a sort of complement to the famous gardens created by La Quintinie, who taught Le Grand Condé the art of grafting.

"Il [La Quintinie] aimait les jardins, était prêtre de Flore,
Il était de Pomone encore."

LA FONTAINE.

Louis XIV. built the Grand Trianon to escape Versailles; Louis XV., the Petit Trianon to escape the Grand. The Petit Trianon, a square pavilion built by the architect Gabriel, is a tasteless edifice, having a façade with tall windows between pilasters, an entablature, and an attic. The English garden, designed by Robert, is most charming; its natural grace is all the more captivating in contrast with the stiff grandeurs of Versailles. The whole place is filled with memories of the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, who here strove to forget her woes in pastoral amusements.

a queen, and fitted it up with every art and every refinement in the so-called style of Louis XVI., which ought rather to bear her own name. Every lady in the great world, and every queen of the stage, which represents the world, would have her Petit Trianon in some quiet place, consisting of a pavilion fitted up in the most coquettish and dainty fashion, where in fascinating solitude, far from the world's din, she might celebrate an exquisite idyl, destined too soon, alas! to be struck down and laid in ruins by the terrific hurricane of the Revolution.

Present aspect of the Petit Trianon.

Nowadays the Petit Trianon gives only in its exterior and its garden any idea of the spirit and the taste in which it was decorated, for its valuable pieces of furniture came into the dealer's hands soon after the Revolution, and the exquisitely carved ornaments and graceful paintings on gold grounds were concealed under thick coats of white paint. He who would see it as it was, must visit the charming boudoir which Marie Antoinette arranged at Fontainebleau in the midst of the well-preserved apartments furnished by her predecessors upon the throne, or must examine the admirable copy of the Little Trianon which King Gustavus III. of Sweden built in his park at Haga, near Stockholm. No one, whatever his taste in art may be, can be insensible to the charm of these small, highly aristocratic and yet thoroughly home-like apartments.

High-bred style of ornament under Louis XVI.

That which was new in the style of Louis XVI. consisted in the employment of antique ornamental designs, which, having lately been made known through the excavations at Pompeii, had become fashionable; we mean those flowery, conventional, and charming arabesques interspersed with many graceful animal shapes, with which the decorators of the time skilfully and pleasingly joined an approach to the realistic use of natural forms, quite opposed to the system of Rococo ornament. Perfectly preserved examples of this style of ornament, which was used at the Petit Trianon, still exist in the before-mentioned boudoir of Marie Antoinette at Fontainebleau, as well as in the palace at Haga, both painted on, and carved in the

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wood-work, although the latter is not left of its natural color, but is gilded in various shades. The forms of furniture were changed yet more radically owing to the reawakened taste for the antique, which, however, the Revolution, with its republican sternness, first caused to rule with undivided sway.[13]

Fig. 98.



Ornament becomes once more purely decorative.

The effort was everywhere made to substitute straight lines for curved and broken lines and unsymmetrical forms, so that simultaneously a right principle of construction was recognized, and ornament was no longer required to serve constructive ends. (See Plate XXIX., B.) It recovered its place as mere decoration, and as such was added or applied to furniture, though not always happily, for chairs and tables were

[13] That return to a purer taste in room decoration and forms of furniture, which followed upon the discovery of Herculaneum (1713), (where, as well as at Pompeii, the excavations were resumed in 1740, and actively carried on during the latter half of the century), a return which resulted in a higher taste in such matters than had prevailed since the sixteenth century, was checked by the Revolution. The breaking up of art guilds and apprenticeships, the universal revolt against tradition, the "sans-culotte" spirit which prevailed in France, then told with fatal effect upon art, and affected all branches of manufacture.

adorned with freely modelled festoons and floating ribbons and garlands, which were too loosely connected with the objects decorated, and stood in too slight connection with them. Not only were the structural parts of furniture once more made rectilinear, but their profiles and dimensions were decidedly more delicate, and the legs of chairs and tables tapered downward to a point. Although this is essentially right in principle, as it gives furniture a more portable appearance, still it can be carried too far. This was so much the case with the furniture of this period that tables, chairs, high-legged secretaries (Fig. 98), and cabinets look poor and thin, stiff and stilted, — an effect which is not condoned by their elegant prettiness.

Return to better principles in design.

By these new forms, furniture and decoration visibly lost all trace of the Rococo character, but the Revolution felt instinctively that the spirit was unchanged, and, in fact, a certain feebleness and effeminacy characterized taste during the reign of Louis XVI., no less than during that of his predecessor. It was also felt that the Greek element in the new style was very impure and debased, and since everything was now to be fundamentally reformed from the standpoint of reason, its light was thrown upon matters of taste also, — to the condemnation of the eighteenth century. Everything must now be simply and suitably constructed upon pure Greek principles, under the guidance of good "philosophic artists." But what came of the employment of these same philosophic artists, and what must naturally result when taste is guided by politics, is shown in the style which was favored by the French Republic, and lasted through the days of the First Empire.

As early as 1790 a writer on art declares, "We have changed everything; freedom, now consolidated in France, has restored the pure taste of the antique. Farewell to your marquetry and boule [14] (Fig. 99), your ribbons, festoons,

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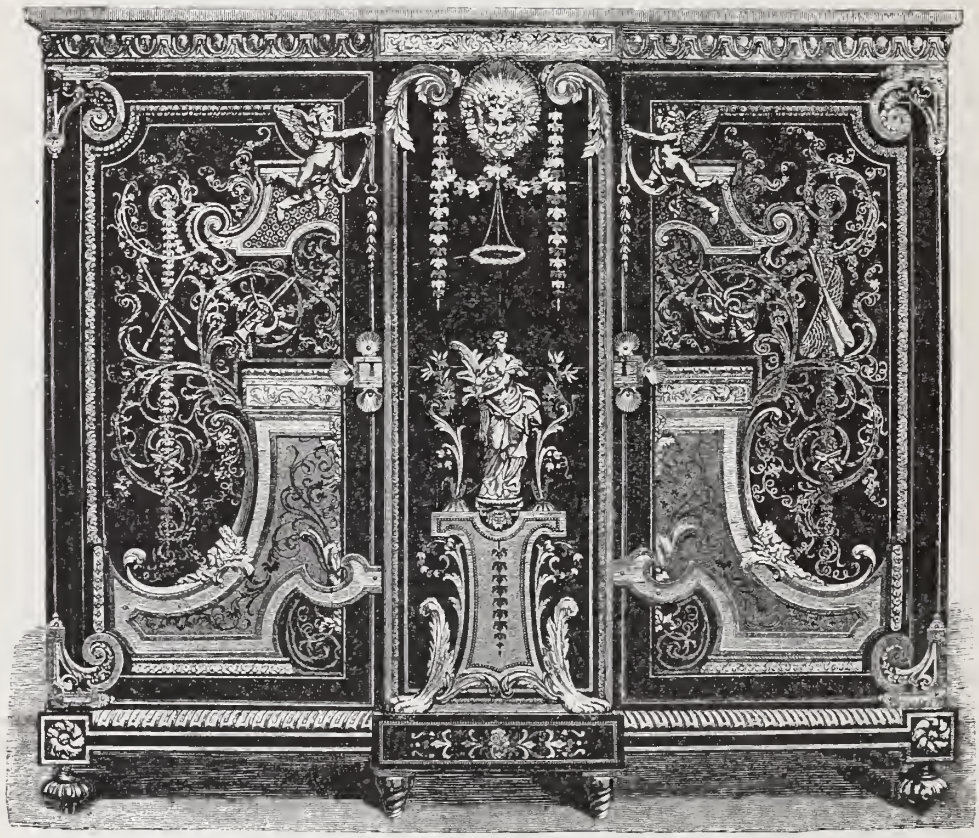
[14] André Charles Boule, b. 1642, d. 1732, the inventor of Boule marquetry (i. e. veneered work of tortoise-shell and brass, to which ivory and enamelled met-

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Antique purity aimed at.

and rosettes of gilded bronze! The hour has come when objects must be made to harmonize with circumstances!" And so all things were changed with the boudoir, which

Fig. 99.



was transformed from a home of frivolity into a political cabinet; and with the drawing-room, which became a place where young men read the newspapers instead of paying elaborate compliments. Amorini gave place to caricatures of every-day events, or to the portraits of "sans-culotte" heroes in the costumes of the "incroyables"; a group of Leda

al were sometimes added), was placed at the head of the Royal furniture department by Louis XIV. and lodged at the Louvre. He was architect, sculptor, and engraver, amateur and collector of drawings and engravings.

was replaced by a representation of the destroyed Bastille; the walls were decorated in the Etruscan fashion, that is, in reddish-brown and black; or in colors, by which the pale decorations of past times were changed for dull and dingy tints upon which Pompeian ornaments equally poor in conception and execution, combined with cameo-like medallions with antique subjects, produced a very poor, meagre, and melancholy effect. The stove even was deprived of its glaze. It received a quasi-antique form, something like one of those pillars which are surmounted by urns,—and was washed over with a uniform tint of dingy gray or brown. The four bedposts were transformed into antique fasces, with gleaming axes, or lances sticking out of them surmounted by Phrygian caps. Ladies' work-tables were shaped like tripods and sacrificial altars; chairs, sofas, and couches made the same pretensions to classical rectitude, and bore on their backs the attributes of freedom and all other possible antique symbols. In one respect they are, if not antique, at least genuinely republican; their forms are so stiff and comfortless, and their upholstery of such stony hardness, that they seem to have been calculated to foster the Spartan virtue of endurance. What place was there for peace and quietness and domestic comfort under the terrors of the guillotine?

The stove, the bed, and other pieces of furniture treated in the classic style.

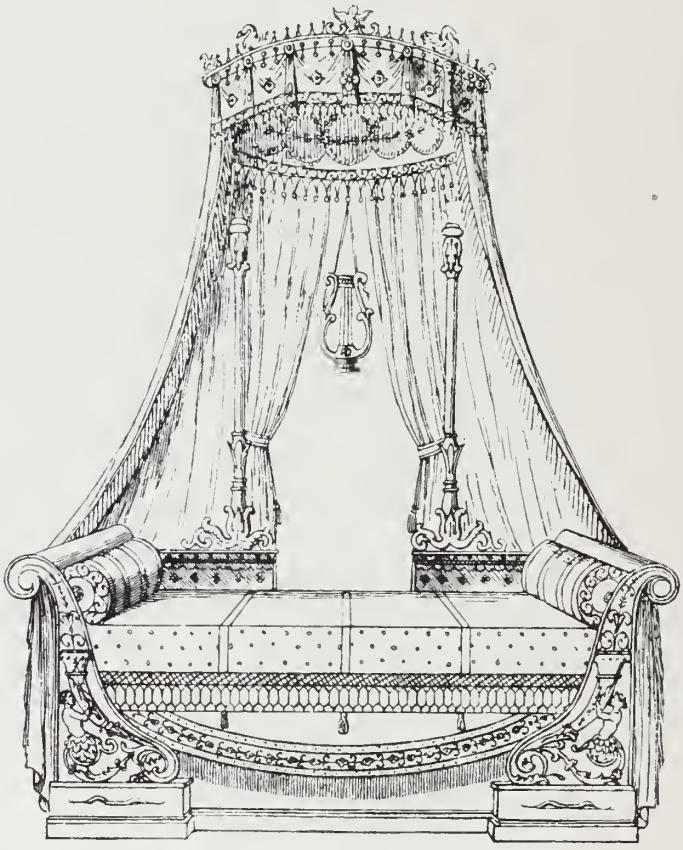
Those terrors passed away; but under the rigid military ceremonial of the Empire, which could form neither literature nor conversation, domestic furniture continued to be stiff, awkward, dreary, and uncomfortable,—a mere travesty of the antique. Nevertheless, these fashions spread very rapidly, even in the dwellings of the middle classes, to which, in their reasonable simplicity, they appeared more appropriate than the Rococo with its irrational feebleness. Furniture in the style of the Empire (see Fig. 100 and tail-piece) had a certain structural solidity, which recommended it to middle-class houses long after Rococo forms had been re-adopted by the fashionable world with the Restoration. Finally, having lost its place even there, it was consigned to the bric-à-brac shop, to the country-house, or to the flames.

Travesty of the antique during the Empire.

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The Restoration brought back the Rococo with all its faults and weaknesses, and none of its virtues. As for ourselves, we have preserved its colorlessness, its monotony of gray tones, its senseless shell-work, and its unnaturally curved lines, but we have lost its modicum of originality, its lively though capricious humor, its charm, its delicacy and refine-

Fig. 100.

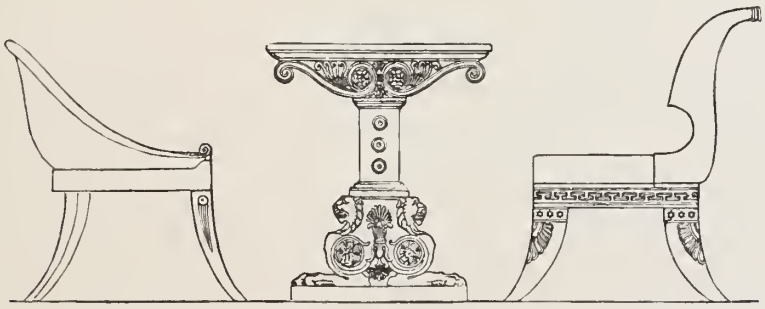


ment. The Rococo of the nineteenth century is thoroughly unattractive, nor has it gained anything by its alliance with naturalism through the use of flowers. Still it stands its ground against all attacks, whether of the Gothic, the Renaissance, or the antique, and it does so because it is the chief element of modern French taste. Only the very latest

efforts at reform in the field of taste and industrial art [15] have been able seriously to threaten it, — efforts which are based upon the resolve to test the value of all that has fancied itself beyond the reach of criticism; to supply an æsthetic standard; to obviate what is objectionable by the diffusion of sounder knowledge; and to substitute for it that which is better, and which rests upon really existing though hitherto unrecognized laws.

[15] It cannot be doubted that the efforts made in our day to diffuse æsthetic knowledge and promote sound taste will be rated in future histories of the latter half of the nineteenth century as one of its most striking features. As yet we cannot fairly estimate the importance of what has been done in our day towards ultimate progress, by the establishment of such institutions as the Industrial Museums of Europe, and above all of their model and superior, the Kensington Museum, with its dependent schools, which last year gave instruction to over 400,000 persons. These great means of education in art have been supplemented in their work by the International Exhibitions held at London, Paris, Vienna, and Philadelphia, in which the world's products have been brought together so that their comparative excellences and defects could be judged of even by superficial observers.

By and by, when the results of thus popularizing art show themselves even more strikingly than they now can upon Fine Art and Industrial Art, the real value of this great movement of our time, of which these are the working agencies, will be understood. "The two words, 'Look there,'" says Mr. Scott Russell, in his *Systematic Technical Education*, "are often more valuable than an hour's lecture, and it is in the belief which they imply, that artists and artisans and the world at large have been supplied with the best opportunities for daily study of objects of art or their reproductions, which, for the most part, had been shut up in royal and private collections."



CHAPTER V.

GENERAL CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS. — STYLE AND HARMONY. — STYLE OF MURAL PAINTING.

Critical and æsthetic point of view undertaken.



AVING followed the history of art in the house as applied to decoration and other artistic arrangements up to the nineteenth century, that is to say, until we have reached our present conditions, we shall now examine the same subject from a critical and æsthetic point of view. What we do to-day and how we do it, are questions which will have to be investigated, and it will appear that we could not well have omitted to study the methods of earlier times, as the low condition of decorative art at present constantly forces us to refer to them. As we have learned to know these methods historically, we must now measure them æsthetically, so that we may see what in them is worthy of permanent acceptance.

In order to attain a standard of absolute judgment, — to discover, I will not say laws, but rather hints, which may guide our decision, — we must first seek to discover the universal conditions inherent in the nature of these objects. This, however, is by no means an easy task, considering the great variety of points of view, as well as of surrounding circumstances.

Difference of treatment necessitated by difference of climate.

If, for instance, we consider the dwelling with reference to the influences of climate, we find the widest possible differences, which are also æsthetically important. The Northerner builds his house with special reference to its being a shelter

from the winter's cold, the Southerner from the summer's heat. The latter wants airy halls, cool walls, and stone pavements; the former, well-closed and not too spacious rooms, wooden and carpeted floors, and wainscoted walls covered with hangings.

Town-house and country-house.

Another point of view is that of city and country, of winter and summer. In the town the æsthetic condition of the dwelling, like the life of the family, relates to the interior; but in the country we count upon beautiful scenery and the open air to provide us with much of our enjoyment. Nature influences the site, the plan, the conditions, the mode of adornment, the choice and disposition of colors, and thus becomes an important æsthetic element. Relying upon her charms, we are wont to arrange and decorate the country-seat more simply and economically, and to reserve for the winter dwelling whatever in the way of material comfort, internal elegance, luxury, and splendor appears to us necessary or desirable.

Influences determining amount of decoration.

Again, large cities and small towns require different treatment. As the houses in the latter are generally small, and are inhabited all the year round, the owner is more disposed to attend to the durable in his house arrangements, and to neglect the ornamental; but it must be remembered that as country towns are not art centres, it is more difficult to decorate a house artistically. In large cities, on the contrary, where so many houses are rented, the moving from house to house and from street to street is frequent. Uncertain about the length of our stay, with perhaps only a few years or months to exercise a limited authority within hired walls, we shrink from surrounding ourselves with elegances and luxuries which we may perhaps only too soon have to abandon to others.

Inducements to beautify the city house.

And yet we who live in great cities are all the more inclined to do so, either because we are charmed with all the beauty and elegance around us, or because we would fain indemnify ourselves for the loss of a garden and a homestead and free communion with nature, by making our houses especially luxurious and attractive; or, finally, because of the higher and richer development of social life.

New difficulties arise when we come to consider differences

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Social grades and differences in means.

of rank and property and the distinction between wealth and moderate means. It is easier to find that absolute standard which we seek where, as in England, the conditions of life conform more generally to a common standard and have given rise to more uniform modes of living. There the gentleman's house may at once be accepted as a model, for even the dwellings of the renowned "upper ten thousand" do not differ from it essentially, excepting in a few cases which need not be taken into account. In Germany the differences of rank and property are much greater than in England, and if we, true to our constant endeavor, would introduce æsthetic harmony (which costs no more than discord), and therewith comfort and cheerfulness, even into less luxurious homes, it is important for us to consider these differences. No rule is of universal application, and palaces where state ceremonials are to be held, and great halls in which a certain amount of splendor is perfectly appropriate, allow certain things which would be wholly out of place in the small rooms of a private house.

The house should express the character and tastes of its owner.

Allowance must furthermore be made for the owner's individuality and the special appropriation of the various rooms in his house. It is in a certain sense an outer garment, which should bear the impress of the owner's peculiarities and be the expression of his character, whether it be grave or gay, simple or showy, modest or ostentatious, warm or cold. Other conditions must also be observed, and other things allowed or forbidden, according as the rooms in a house are intended for sleeping or reception rooms, for parlors or dining-rooms, for the use of ladies or of gentlemen.

Such being the case, the task which we have undertaken appears somewhat complicated and difficult. But, however varied the conditions may be, the object of our investigations is after all really intrinsically the same, and bears its own conditions within itself. This object is the enclosed room with its four walls, its floor and ceiling, and its movable furniture, which is composed of a given material and has a definite end, and out of these common conditions, upon which it rests, we have to deduce general principles which may serve us as a standard.

The internal decoration of the house here considered.

In this critical, as in the former historical, division of our subject, it is not the house itself, that is to say, the work of the architect, with which we have to deal, but its internal decoration, — the work of the painter, the artisan, the decorator, the carpenter, and the upholsterer. We shall therefore devote particular attention to that which is dependent upon the taste and choice of the tenant, and upon his varying wishes and needs, rather than to the house itself.

We must admit that this division is one which is even less suited to a critical than to an historical treatment of our subject. No one will deny that from the highest artistic point of view the house should be as it were cast in one mould, so that the outside and inside may be in harmony with each other, and combine together to make a perfect work of art. From this it follows that, as it is a work of art, it should be the creation of a single artist, provided he be capable of solving a problem which demands unity and is yet so many sided. We do not, however, live under ideal circumstances, and our working possibilities are of quite another sort. The demand for an all-pervading harmony, both external and internal, can be reasonably satisfied only where the house is the one dwelling and also the exclusive property of a single family; but never in the barrack-like houses of our cities and large towns, which shelter so many separate existences and families under one roof. In England, as a rule, each family has a house to itself; yet the Englishman is careless about its exterior, takes no thought about its æsthetic charm, and on account of the privacy of his family life bestows whatever decoration he may think desirable upon the inner rooms. The outside of his home does not concern him much, and he does not build for the people in the street. There is, indeed, a certain want of regard for others in this view, but it is, at least, more reasonable than the opposite course, which, while it richly decorates the exterior, leaves the inner walls bare and the furniture meagre and tasteless.

Influence of the English mode of life upon the house.

Moreover, the separation which we have in our mind, namely, that of internal decoration from the special work of the architect, is possible, since it exists. It is not we who make it,

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Separation of internal decoration from construction.

but the circumstances of the times, which we cannot control. By far the most numerous cases are those in which the work of the architect ends with the building, and the task of decorating the interior, and of furnishing it artistically, devolves upon others, or upon the owners.

In the few and exceedingly rare cases in which there is a possibility of absolute artistic completeness, the artist may indeed conceive and finish his work in unison with a given principle. But we submit that even here one may have too much of a good thing; and that one must take a reasonable and moderate view of this unity, — not that of an artistic or archæological pedant. The house ought to be artistically decorated, but it can rarely be a work of art in the highest, that is in a monumental, sense.

Reasons against striving for unity of style.

We live in an age of rapid changes. The family grows, multiplies, and diminishes again when the grown-up children leave the house. Our needs widen and increase with the growth of the family; even our desires change with the vicissitudes of life. If we make our habitation a veritable work of art, complete in itself, to which nothing can be added, from which nothing can be taken away, in which nothing can be changed without destroying its unity, without injuring a master work, or being guilty of a barbarism, we set a limit to all our fluctuating desires and requirements. We are inclined to pity the poor mortal who dwells in such a monumental artwork. Constantly tempted by the new objects which the prolific skill of the time and the chances of life bring daily before his eyes, he must perpetually refuse himself the pleasure of acquisition. He can hang no new picture on the wall, set up no statue, exchange no piece of furniture, and add none which may chance to have attracted him by its beautiful workmanship. Everything has been perfected from the beginning, and cannot be improved. By following such a course our homes would finally become a weariness and a torment to us, and, instead of giving us pleasure, be an obstacle to the gratification of our most legitimate wishes. Is it not better that they should bear the impress of the changefulness and unrest of

Liberty to change at will desirable.

modern life? Our homes ought to allow us to exchange things of which we have grown tired for such better and more convenient objects as this progressive age may furnish; they ought to permit us to combine our new possessions agreeably with the old, and to carry out such alterations and enlargements as may suit our changing and increasing needs. So will the history of our lives be agreeably and attractively reflected in the history of our dwellings.

Difficulties in the way of carrying out a certain style.

I must confess that I am somewhat heretical about these lofty and absolute artistic pretensions, as also about accepting an absolute unity of style, that is to say, a fixed historic style. It is very easy to propose such a condition for a house, and the reason for doing so appears plausible, but it is very difficult to carry it out. In the first place, it is so costly an operation as to be out of the question for the majority of men. In Paris, indeed, it is possible to collect out of the contents of the shops whatever is needed for the furnishing of a house in a given and uniform style; but even there this can only be done in a style belonging to the last two centuries, or rather to the time of Louis XV. and Louis XVI.; that is to say, to an art-epoch which had already lapsed into extravagance and affectation. We (Germans) are not so fortunate as to be able to do even this, and perhaps it is just as well, considering that the style in question is nothing more nor less than the worst phase of the Rococo. Such being the case, we must call in an artist to make designs for us, and every one knows how much all work increases in price which departs from the beaten track.

Artistic difficulties also stand in our way. Such a course would demand a universal and profound knowledge of all styles of art, which we are as yet very far from possessing. Faults of style are at present more easily detected than remedied. Among architects there are but few who are capable of carrying out the constructive part of a building perfectly, as soon as it is demanded that the style shall conform not to that of a whole epoch, but to a certain given time in an epoch. If, then, passing beyond the mere building we extend our

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requisition to decoration and furniture, as well as to the design and arrangement of movable articles, the thing becomes positively impracticable. For, even supposing that we had the necessary amount of art-archæological knowledge, there would still be lacking a great many designs for objects of which there are no longer any examples remaining, or which were never executed. Glass vessels, for example, were seldom used in the Romanesque or Gothic periods, and are not now to be found, while porcelain-ware took its forms from the Japanese and Chinese. We must then either make concessions or invent fanciful forms, or copy ancient earthen or tin vessels in order to be correct in style. Besides, the relics of earlier times do not suffice for the requirements of modern civilization, which has in many respects procured for us a degree of comfort which it would be very foolish to relinquish for the sake of style. And supposing even that it were possible to create a dwelling perfectly harmonious and uniform in style in all its appointments, a fresh difficulty would arise in that we should take upon ourselves the same sort of burden and annoyance which I have described in speaking of the monumental residence. At every alteration we should be plunged in doubt; every new object would suggest the inquiry as to whether it corresponded, for instance, with the style and manner of the year 1500, and we should be perhaps first obliged to make it the subject of learned research. Finally, when every other obstacle had been overcome, we poor moderns would be compelled to put ourselves in harmony with the historic habitation by adopting a fitting costume, unless we were willing to be out of keeping with our surroundings, and thus destroy the effect of our own arrangements. No one certainly would carry the thing so far, but such a course would be logical.

Material obstacles to completeness.

Consequent perplexities.

The carrying out of a distinct and uniform style seems only thoroughly justifiable when applied to the perfecting and finishing of an already existing building; as, for instance, to the arrangement of a castle built in a certain style, and having served as a family seat from generation to generation. Here, where the inside arrangements also are intended to be endur-

When the attempt is justifiable.

ing, the architectural style of the exterior might be properly taken as a guide, and our modern needs be reconciled to it as far as practicable.

Absolute unity never existed.

Such a harmonizing of present wants with an already existing style was at all times necessary; for the absolute uniformity which we think it proper to require to-day never existed, not even in those times when one art-style was everywhere predominant. This demand is indeed rather a proof of our own present stylistic poverty, and of our search after a style. In all times there have been fluctuations of taste and fashion, although they were not always so rapid as now, and there have always been many varieties of house furniture, in the past perhaps even more than at present. Articles were formerly made stronger and more capable of resisting the wear of time, so that ancestral furniture could, in accordance with custom, be handed down from generation to generation. Thus the rooms and chests of our forefathers must, in process of time, have become filled with a great variety of objects very incongruous in style, and little in harmony with each other, and yet we do not read that the artistic consciences of people in the olden time were greatly wounded thereby. Are we to suppose that when, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Renaissance crossed the Alps with such wonderful rapidity, people made haste to exchange their old Gothic house furniture for that which was in accordance with the new fashion? On the contrary, they left their chests and cabinets, their tables and panellings, as they were, until growing needs or actual decay rendered a change necessary.

What our forefathers did.

Variety not necessarily incompatible with harmony.

We know from the appearance of houses belonging to lovers and collectors of art who have selected with genuine taste and a conscious purpose, and have allowed decorative considerations to influence them in the matter of arrangement, that such a heterogeneous mixture of pieces of furniture, whether inherited or collected, need not necessarily produce an impression of artistic confusion, incongruity, and disorder. If these have been chosen without judgment, the effect is that of a dealer's warehouse. But if a true artistic feeling has presided over

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the arrangement of the various objects scattered about the rooms, and if they are made to harmonize by a background, the generally picturesque aspect and harmonious effect is astonishing, so good indeed that no one would think of taking exception to it on the ground that many climes and centuries had been laid under contribution to produce it. (See Plate XXX.)

Time harmonizes all things.

That however upon which the unity of impression in such cases especially depends, is not so much the effect of art as of time, which tones down the harshness of the colors, dims the lustre of metal, and spreads a patina over everything, so as to soften and unite the most incongruous objects. We cannot literally imitate what time has here done for us; we cannot make new objects look old, nor can we give them an artificial patina without being guilty of archæological trickery. We may, however, here learn this important lesson, namely, that the desirable and wholly satisfactory effect which gives a house artistic consecration does not depend upon the complete development of a well-defined historic style, but upon harmony, which can be attained without its use. Harmony is therefore the one object to be aimed at in the modern dwelling, since we do not ourselves possess a definite and characteristic style with which to supply its place.

Harmony should be our aim, in default of a peculiar style.

Artistic harmony depends upon two things, color and form. In both there must be unity, that is to say, a union and blending together of many dissimilar things.

Color more important than form.

Ordinarily, and one may say absolutely, color is of more importance in the decorative appointments of a house than form. Color makes the first and strongest impression; it gives the general tone; it may be used, if not to conceal faults and incongruities of form, at least to divert attention from them. Although a perfect eye for color is a rare gift, the power of perceiving defects and dissonances in color is much less uncommon than that of perceiving defects in form, which cannot be appreciated without a certain amount of education. It is color which chiefly gives character to a house, and by its help we may produce any desirable effect. A room may be made



What color can do to make the house charming.

to look narrower or broader, lower or higher, by means of color. If we desire to make it grave or cheerful, bare or rich, simple or splendid; if we would impart to it a cosey and attractive or a poetic aspect, make it look warm or cool; if we would fashion for ourselves a place to dream in, or one fitted for serious and solitary meditation, or one suited to social enjoyment, our first and last medium is color. Color is a fairy, an enchantress who brings good and evil, joy and sunshine, or mourning and melancholy in her train, but she is always positive in her effect, and never allows herself to be treated with indifference. She repels and attracts, satisfies or disturbs, raises enjoyment to rapture or deepens discomfort into horror and *ennui*. He who covets her must not play the coward as we generally do nowadays, but must bear himself with that courage which wins beauty. Courage is needed chiefly at the outset, in the choice of the pervading tone. This is decisive, and it involves the artist in certain unavoidable consequences. Nevertheless, his freedom in the choice of colors and shades is so great that the possibilities of working out a rich scale of melodious hues are almost unlimited.

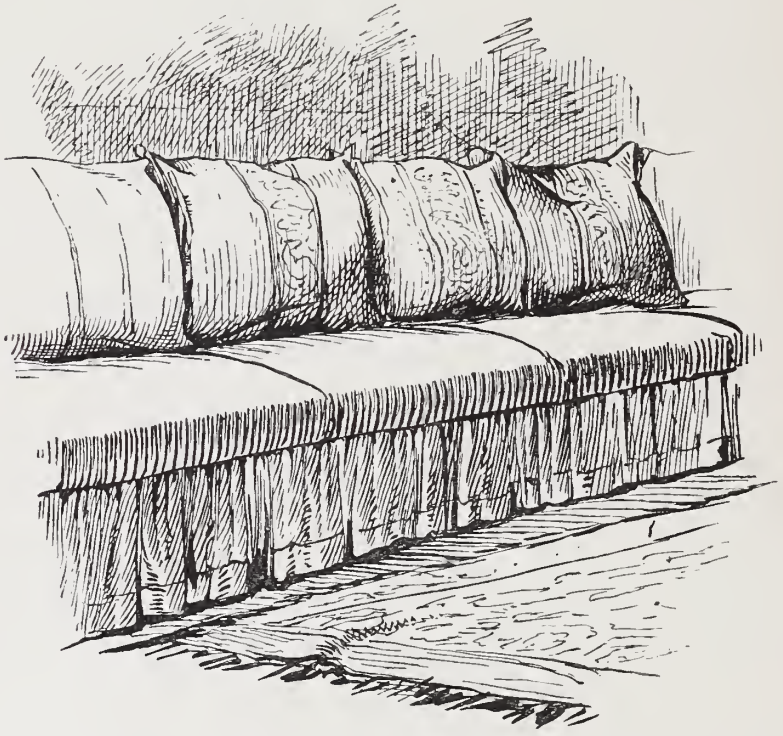
But although we are to depend mainly upon colors and colored decoration for effect, it will not do to neglect unity and harmony in form, because their absence is less generally observed. By unity of form, as I have before said, I do not mean any one of those definite historic styles which have been important in the history of art. We may expressly give up any idea of the Greek, the Gothic, the Renaissance, or any other style, no matter by what name it may be called, and yet insist upon unity; we may even demand a style, or, more properly speaking, style in the abstract. A design, a form of decoration, a piece of furniture, may have style without belonging in style to any one of the famous art-epochs either as original or copy, just as a painting may have style without following the taste of any master, time, or school. Style is the idealization of an object, the harmonious adaptation of form to means and end, the identification of the object with itself and its idea. A piece of furniture has style when it is exactly

Style is not dependent on a fixed style.

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what it ought to be, when it is suited to the purpose for which it was intended, and has that purpose unmistakably inscribed upon it. From this point of view the simplest and the richest furniture, the humblest and the stateliest dwelling, may alike be full of style. A Turkish divan (Fig. 101), for example, is a piece of house furniture full of style, although it shows no piece of wood-work in which a definite style can be recognized, although — or perhaps precisely because — it has no fixed, sharp-

Fig. 101



lined form. A generation of artists or artisans, penetrated with the truth of this principle, will show style in all its works, while a whole epoch which ignores it will produce work wanting in style, even though, as was the case in the eighteenth century, it has a general style, or, more properly speaking, a general manner. Our modern works of art have no style, because we have forgotten, or do not think it worth while, to study out the right and proper form for a given object. We

Want of style in modern works.

are always looking for something new and uncommon. When we have discovered our error, one seeks a remedy in the Greek, another in the Gothic, a third in the Rococo, instead of seeking it in the things themselves, and in our own desires, means, and ends. By following the former method we have been led to affect foreign ways, to help ourselves with the poorest means, and to think that we have done something wonderful when we have made use of Greek frets, palmetto leaves, or a few Gothic finials and bits of fretwork, while, if we would but follow the second, we might recover our identity, answer the desired ends, namely, our æsthetic and practical requirements, and bring about harmony with ourselves, our age, and our ideal.

What the modern house should be.

There is no other way of expressing what we wish the modern house to be than to say that it should be a dwelling idealized, that is to say, a dwelling whose beauty and effect rest upon a basis of truth, one in which unity is attained by means of color and form. If we hold firmly to this we shall avoid many of the prevalent mistakes of the day, and be able to answer many puzzling questions with certainty.

We often see people attempting to make a room appear something quite other than it is, by decorative means. This is a violation of truth and unity. We must and should decorate an enclosed space as such, instead of trying to turn it into an open space, a wood, or a garden; this would be an attempt to produce illusion, that is, an attempt to deceive, and not an idealization of the object, or a harmonizing of artistic means with an end or an idea. We can, however, think of exceptional cases in which this very thing may be not only allowable but even agreeable. We call to mind how the English poet, Leigh Hunt, once transformed the prison in which he was confined for two years because he had offended against the laws of the press. He covered the walls with hangings upon which thick-set rose-hedges were represented; trained bright-blooming creepers across his barred and grated window, until it looked like the work of a gardener; placed flowers upon his writing-table, and in every other possible place, and painted his ceiling like the bright blue sky, with light clouds

The prison of Leigh Hunt.

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and flying birds. Thus the imprisoned poet exorcised the grim aspect of his desolate walls, and took away the sense of confinement by surrounding himself with rich and odorous foliage, amid which he seemed to live as in a garden. Under the circumstances the poet's fancy strikes us as charming and poetic, but we should err if we erected what he did into a principle. Having sinned against the ideal, we should soon find that the outraged idea would avenge itself. If we painted a wood or a grove upon our walls, however skilfully, successfully, and deceptively, the sight of the real forest, with its play of air and light, and of the real flower-garden, which we can freely enjoy, would soon render our artificial wood and garden tedious, wearisome, and vexatious. I once saw a chamber in a little inn on the south coast of England, through the window of which an immense ivy-branch had grown, covering the walls and ceiling with a dense curtain of shining dark green foliage, and entirely surrounding the fireplace, in which the fire burned brightly. The little room, with its luxuriant verdure illuminated by the ruddy light of the flame, was infinitely lovely; but if any one should attempt to decorate a room similarly by painting, the absence of charm and poverty of effect would at once convince us of our mistake.

Art outdone by nature.

False treatment in design for wall-papers.

There was a similar fault in the magnificent and, of their kind, incomparable French wall-papers displayed at the last Paris Exposition. They made the walls of the room appear like those of a garden-wall with rich architectural members, pillars, and niches, upon and in which stood great vases of flowers, and with large windows looking out upon a beautiful landscape. It was impossible to understand what the room thus decorated was intended to represent. If a garden, then the inside arrangements of the room destroyed the illusion. If a closed room, then how could the blue sky be seen over the walls? The evil was increased by the fact that the same landscape was repeated in every window. An ornament which is nothing in itself may be repeated; but it is as unnatural to repeat a scene taken from nature, as it would be for Nature to repeat herself.

Errors of this sort are commonly to be met with in modern rooms, especially in those of the more pretentious kind; for French wall-paper makers and decorators pride themselves especially upon committing them. They have once more brought the blue-sky ceiling with its silvery clouds and winged birds and flying genii into fashion, as in the Rococo period, and as Leigh Hunt did in his prison. There is doubtless something beautiful in an ever-smiling sky, but one does not always live under it, nor always in the sunshine of happiness. A despondent soul might be inclined, and with equal reason, to paint black and sombre storm-clouds upon the ceiling. No one can fail to see the absurdity of suspending a chandelier from the clouds, or of screwing a hook into the vault of heaven for the purpose. There are people nowadays who like to make a Bedouin's tent of their bedroom, and a hut of reeds of their bath-room. These are individual vagaries, which may be pardoned in Oriental travellers and enthusiastic fishermen; but art and beauty have nothing to do with them.

Sky-like ceilings condemned.

If we pursue this train of thought further, we shall soon be led to form a correct judgment of the value of architecture *imitated* by painting, which, however, must not be confounded with real architecture *enriched* by painting. The style which we wish for demands truth, for it does not do away with reality, but only idealizes it. Under certain circumstances the architect can and will treat the interior of a building architecturally, especially if he has to deal with larger and more important rooms, planned rather for public and festal purposes than for private habitation. In these he will break the long stretch of the walls with columns or pilasters, terminate them above with a projecting cornice, and treat the ceiling in a corresponding fashion; that is to say, he will divide the vast and otherwise flat surface into a rhythmical alternation of projecting and retreating parts. The sculptor and worker in stucco will follow him and add ornament to architecture, either simple or elaborate as taste may dictate. No objection can be made to this, if consistency of style, or the nature and object of the rooms, demand it or render it desira-

Proper limits to painted architecture and sculpture.

CHAP. V.

ble. But in such case everything in the rooms should be really what it pretends to be. Painted architecture and sculpture are not like painted ornament, whose effect is produced by color and not by light and shade, wherefore they should be treated neither from an architectural nor a plastic, but from a pictorial point of view. Painted architecture and sculpture can only be correct, or rather can only appear to be that which they represent, from one point of view, and under a certain fixed light. Under all other conditions they are manifestly deceptive, and therefore disturb that harmony in a room which should be regarded as the first and last requirement. We must, therefore, utterly condemn the representation of a real wall with its columns, fluted pilasters, bases, capitals, cornices, and niches containing statues, in different shades of gray color, as well as that which was often attempted in the romantic period, namely, the transformation of a hall with flat walls and ceiling into a mediæval hall, by adorning its sides with Gothic columns and pointed arches, and filling its ceiling with a network of tracery in the flamboyant style. The present fashion, which puts the painter into the place of the stucco-worker by allowing him to decorate the walls and ceiling of a room with painted panels, and mouldings whose high lights are set off by gray shadows, is quite as objectionable. However cleverly this is done, the shifting sunlight or candlelight will throw the shadows on the wrong side, and betray the falseness of the whole. If painted decoration is to be employed, it is certainly better to treat it from the pictorial stand-point, for plastic decoration, whose means are restricted, is not more effective, nor is painted sculpture more durable.

Harmony of effect indispensable.

The question of painting the really plastic or architectural divisions of the wall in color is quite a different one. Here painting is perfectly in its place when the essential parts are not already colored, as, for instance, when they are made of variegated marbles, because it assists architecture and sculpture, the effects of which are due simply to lights and shadows, by emphasizing the lines, accentuating the forms, and dividing them more clearly one from another. Thus to the general

How real divisions of the wall should be painted.

decoration, of which architecture and sculpture can here give the outlines only, painting adds its own peculiar element, that of color, which, however, must be kept subordinate to the other two.

Conditions to be observed.

If we remember that the room must be treated as an enclosed space both in its character and uses; that it is to be beautified and idealized by ornament, but never changed or perverted, we shall find the right way to answer the most perplexing question which can arise in connection with our subject, that, namely, which relates to the style and the conditions of the higher kind of pictorial decoration. This question is all the more difficult to answer as it has become perplexed precisely through the most splendid artistic achievements, which excite our admiration, and which have shaped the art of succeeding centuries.

What ornament should be.

If the chief artistic aim of inhabited rooms is harmony in color and form, then everything which contributes to their adornment must be subservient to this harmony and enter into it. Ornament is, therefore, subject to law; it has a function and is nothing in itself; it ought never to make us forget the room which it is intended to adorn and to idealize. It must never appear as if the walls were made for the ornament, but, contrariwise, because the ornament exists for the room, and must therefore be subordinated to it. No matter how many arts and how many artists contribute to the decoration of a room, all must be governed by one idea, and work together to one end, since it is only the result of their combined efforts, the complete whole, which, by the perfect accordance of all its parts, becomes a work of art. Their joint action makes the work perfect. The painter, to whom it is of the utmost importance to recognize this principle, must not forget that his own hands are tied in some degree; he must work in concert with the architect and the sculptor, for the arts are intended to exalt and not to destroy or disturb each other; he must remember that what he is working out is a decoration, and not an independent creation like an easel picture, which has to concern itself only with its own beauty.

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Object of the easel-picture.

The easel-picture is a perfectly isolated work of art; it has its own unities of subject, light, and perspective. Its object is to produce a species of illusion; to present to the beholder, who looks into the frame as through a window, a real subject, it may be under an idealized aspect, and it can therefore only be properly seen from one point of view. In order to fix the eye on the principal action, figure, or object, the easel-painter is obliged to treat everything else as subordinate, and to place the former in heightened light. If we attempt to apply the freedom and the principles which govern easel-painting to mural decoration in the house, we shall see what the result will be. If the wall-painting be treated like an easel-picture, or if it has been painted in a studio to be subsequently let into the wall, it is a mere chance whether it will harmonize with the intentions of the architect or the rest of the decoration and appointments. Just because it is the counterfeit of an external reality, it is dangerous to the harmony of the place. Imitations of real scenes with life-size figures may make a room, which is intended to be a dwelling-place and an abode of comfort, perfectly unhomelike and dismal, for one lives in it among strange and often very peculiar people in very abnormal situations. If I treat a mural painting like an easel-picture, I must needs count upon its being hung upon a certain level with the eye, where it can be seen from a certain point of view, from which alone it can give me peaceful enjoyment; if I quit this point, the figures are out of place, the perspective is destroyed, and if there be any architecture in the picture, it is distorted. From any other than the right place in the room, it is a pain instead of a pleasure to look at it. Again, if such a picture is not hung on a level with the eye, it will look badly from all parts of the room. It may be truly said that there are many who neither see the evil nor feel the torture thus occasioned. That may be; but the rules of art are not founded on the observations of the blind, but upon those of people who can see and feel. But even if the picture be so placed as to look well from at least one point of view, the satisfaction which it gives to the occupant of the

Why a mural painting should not be treated like an easel-picture.

room will still be but small. Experience teaches that when we are accustomed to be surrounded with beauty in our rooms, we no longer care for anything but the general impression; and this, if the mural decorations have been painted according to the principles of easel-painting, must everywhere be false. It follows, therefore, that mural painting should be conducted on other principles; it should not aim at deception or at the illusion of reality; it should not be of that sort which requires to be looked at from a single fixed point; it ought not to force one object upon the attention, or hide another by putting it into deep shadow, but from every point of view alike should produce a pleasing, equable, tranquillizing impression upon those who live in the rooms. To this end it is especially needful that the painting be treated with little modelling and a shallow background like an illumination. The drawing should be excellent, the arrangement of colors harmonious and in keeping with the place; if these conditions are fulfilled, despite the simplicity of the means employed the greatest results may be anticipated, and there will be no reason to fear that the peace, the artistic repose, of the room will be destroyed.

How mural painting should be treated.

Up to about the end of the sixteenth century all artistic nations obeyed these rules for wall-painting either consciously or unconsciously. The Byzantine and Italian glass-mosaic, all the mediæval wall-painting, which aimed at and attained the most brilliant and dazzling effects, did not violate them. Even the later Greek wall-painting, which we know through Herculaneum and Pompeii, and regard as the outgrowth of an audacious, unbridled, and law-despising art-epoch, and which, for this very lawlessness, was sternly condemned, as we have already shown, by the severer critics of the time, — even this never aimed at an illusion of reality, but regarded its own countless and manifold designs as mere play of fancy. The very thing which Vitruvius censures,[1] the wayward, audacious, and absolutely impossible treatment of architecture, is its real justification, and stamps it as genuine decoration.

Rules for wall-painting; when observed.

[1] Lib. VII., Ch. V.

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When these rules began to be neglected.

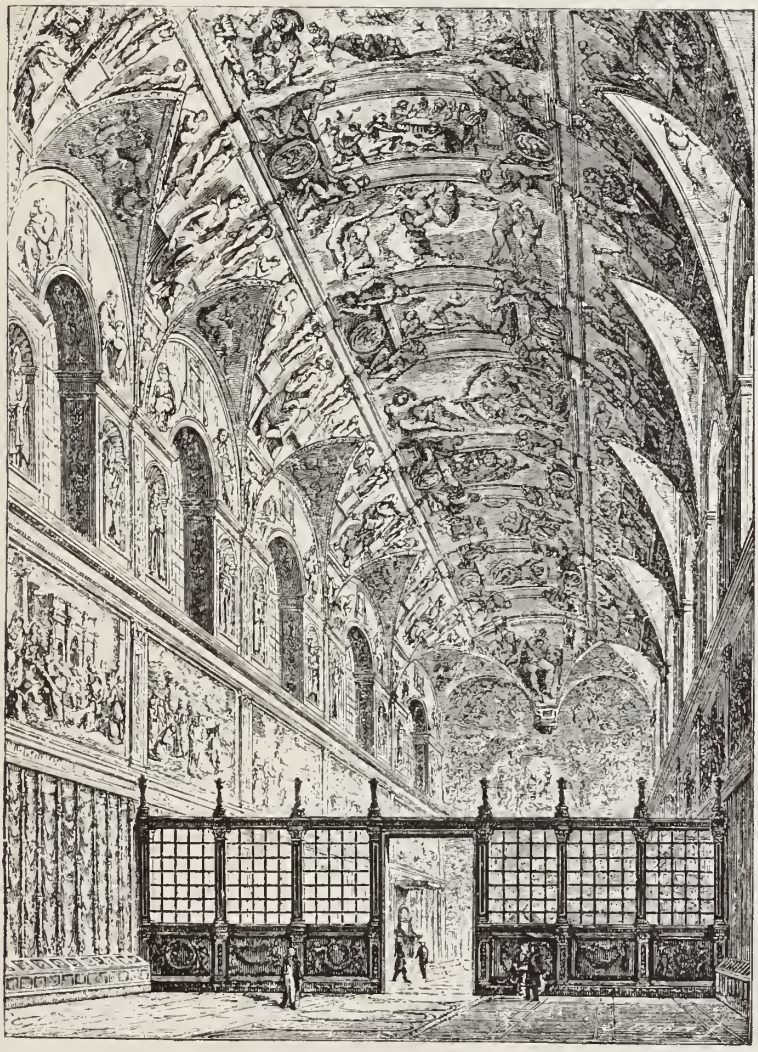
The painters of the Renaissance were the first to disregard these principles. This naturally resulted from the great development of easel-painting at that art-epoch, and the wonderful perfection which it attained in reproducing reality. We are as far as possible from lamenting a tendency in art which has given us some of the most marvellous works of any time. It is not surprising that the artist in the consciousness of his power should have treated wall-surfaces as he did canvas, and that his greatest works should have been executed upon far larger flat surfaces than any which a studio could furnish. In the Stanze of Raphael and in the Sistine Chapel, we willingly forget that the rooms themselves, which were to be decorated, really sink into insignificance, and that it is to the pictures only

Fig. 102.



that we pay homage. We spare ourselves no amount of trouble and discomfort — and this in the Sistine Chapel is not small — to find the proper point of view and position

Fig. 103.



of the head for seeing the pictures to the best advantage. In the Stanze of Raphael (Fig. 102) an architectural principle is indeed still noticeable in the arrangement of the

The systems of Raphael and Michelangelo.

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paintings, and in the ornamental frames which surround them, yet even here the immense importance of each picture destroys the effect of the room as a whole. In the Sistine Chapel, however (Fig. 103), Michelangelo the painter forgot Michelangelo the architect; the artistic division of the many subjects which he painted on the ceiling was neither planned from the stand-point of decorative architecture, nor from that of decorative painting. Absorbed in the contemplation of each subject, we are conscious only of wonder at the achievements of a giant in art; but the impression made by the chapel as a pictorial and architectural whole, in which two sister arts have worked, or ought to have worked, together is almost null. When we have once succeeded in breaking loose from the power of the painting enough to consider the general effect, we cannot conceal from ourselves that the impression made upon us by the ceiling is prejudicial to that made by the Last Judgment, — a fresco in which all laws of decorative design are set at defiance, not to mention the other frescos which are painted in rows to the right and left upon the walls.

Criticism silent before their works.

It is true that before these creations of Raphael and Michelangelo criticism is silent. We rejoice that such works have been accomplished by whatever means, and gladly forget the sacrifices involved. But it is quite otherwise with the works of their successors, who did not mount upon their shoulders, but merely trod in their footprints. It is rare that the excellence of the details is sufficient to console us for the loss of unity of impression, and so we are naturally led back to discuss the question as to the possibility of producing a harmonious effect through the decorative union of sculptural, architectural, and pictorial ornamentation. We are also aware that the artists of the Baroque and decadent periods returned to this sort of decorative effect, and sometimes, despite their mannerism, with remarkable success, though they attained it by sacrificing beauty of detail.

There are pictures, however, which aim at representing actual objects, so decoratively treated that they conduce to a

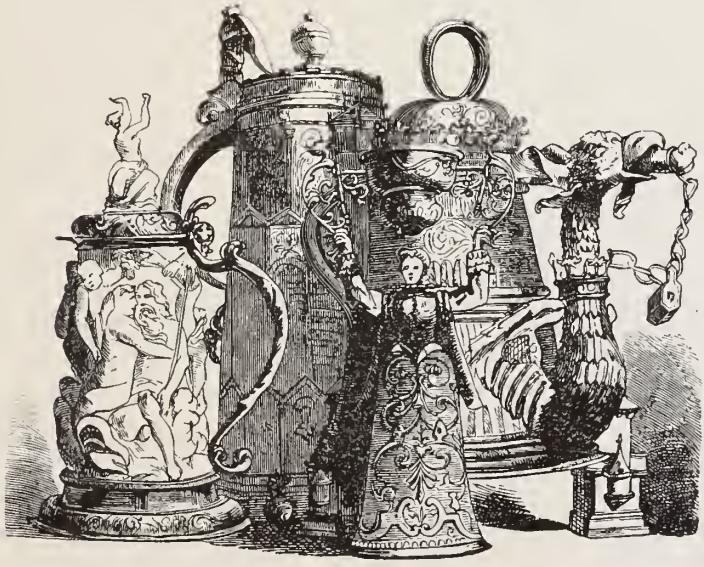


APOLLON GALLERY, LOUVRE.

Decorative treatment of real objects, how accomplished.

general harmony; and of these many might be cited, especially among works of the seventeenth century. The first requisite is that details should be disregarded, and broad effects aimed at through masses. For the rest, in order to use this manner so as to give it full effect, large rooms are needed, and a rich and striking plastic and architectural ornamentation. In such cases, when the individual picture is of so little importance that only a passing glance is vouchsafed to it, one may overlook many faults in perspective, as well as other technical imperfections, and give one's self up entirely to the general decorative effect.

But this, as we have said, applies only to spacious festal and state apartments, like the galleries of the Louvre (see Plate XXXI.) or of Versailles. Were the same principle to be applied to private dwellings, we should be crushed under the heaviness and weight of the impression, while at the same time our enjoyment of the details would be destroyed. This, too, is a distinction which has been often ignored in modern times, and has led to many errors.



CHAPTER VI.

THE FLOOR AND THE WALL.

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BEFORE entering into the discussion of details, and first of all of the floor, we must briefly recall the result of the general observations which we made in the last chapter.

Recapitulation.

We found that harmony in color and form is what we ought to aim at in the interior decoration of our houses. But in trying to reach this aim, we purposely left all distinctive historical styles out of the question, whether Egyptian, Greek, Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, or by whatever name they may be called, and yet we demanded style in the abstract as a needful requisite of perfect artistic harmony. The double sense in which we have used the word *style* — a double sense which will be intelligible without further explanation only to those who are thoroughly versed in matters of art — may, it is to be feared, give rise to some misunderstanding. We must, therefore, return to this point, as it is the fulcrum of all our discussions, the point where we propose to plant the lever which is to remove all difficulties.

Definition of style.

What we mean by style, — style *par excellence*, — is the idealization of an object, the harmonizing of its form with its idea, its material, its purpose. The form should be the clear and full expression of the idea, and absolutely nothing else. The form is the language of the idea. But if the form is the language, the expression of the idea, and must be in harmony with certain needs, with our needs, then it is easy to see

that, as these are not the same at different periods, forms not only *may*, but *must* differ according to circumstances.

State of culture at a given period expressed in its forms.

The forms which were fashioned by the art-styles of the past expressed the state of culture at the time being, but they do not express our culture, and do not satisfy our needs. If, therefore, we simply adopt forms which were peculiar to other states of art and civilization, we copy their elements mechanically and thoughtlessly, and thus instead of *forms* we have only *formulæ*. The latter term, to be sure, is not commonly used in connection with the arts of design, but it is here quite as applicable, as, for example, in the department of ethics or of religion, in which the modes of expression of bygone time have crystallized into formulæ, which merely serve to ease our consciences. Similarly, in matters of art, we are also only too apt to rest contented with the externals of a foreign style, and to be perfectly satisfied if we can say, "This is Greek," or, "This is Gothic," although a Greek or a mediæval artist, could he rise from the dead, would undoubtedly shake his head rather significantly at our doings. He would probably say, "Do not do *what* we did, but do *as* we did."

We should work for our own time as the ancients did for theirs.

The ancient artists worked for their own time and its needs, and for these they found suitable forms: let us in the same manner find forms for our own needs and ends. Let us disregard all secondary considerations, let us so fashion things that they shall represent nothing but what they really are, and what, according to their destination, they are intended to be, and thus style will come of itself, without our having sought it. Then our products will be in harmony not only with themselves and with their ideas, but also with each other, and a general harmony of forms will be the result.

In this sense we might also designate style as taste, for in truth only those objects are tasteful which are to perfection what they should be, in which, therefore, form and idea correspond perfectly. But the word "taste" again has a twofold meaning, and indeed the modern Frenchman applies it more especially to objects which are wanting in style, or, in other words, to things in which the form is not dictated by the

Distinction between taste and style.

destination or by the nature of the object, but rather by some external motive, such as a whim, a caprice, or the search for novelty and effect. Thus French influence has put fashion in the place of style, and eccentricity in that of beauty.

The reader will probably see, from what has thus far been said, that we are not going to chant the praises of our modern industrial and decorative art, although we proposed to ignore the styles of bygone periods, and to accept as our only principle the harmony of form and of destination. On the contrary, it will appear from what follows that the adherence to our principle will frequently lead us nearer to ancient than to modern forms and practices. This is owing to the fact that past art-epochs have frequently found, not only the best forms for themselves, but absolutely *the* best forms; as, for instance, Greek art for vases, and Renaissance art for certain kinds of furniture. This also shows us how the study of ancient works of art may be made serviceable.

After these preliminaries, we may now turn to our proper subject.

Gradation of color in a room arbitrary.

It has sometimes been laid down as a law, that the colors in a room ought to ascend from dark to light, just as in nature, in which we also find the ground to be the darkest, while light is represented by the sky. There is some truth in this, although the comparison is a lame one, as the closed room is not the open air, but its very opposite. The proposed scale of tones, ascending from dark to light, causes the room to appear more free and airy, and makes the ceiling, or that which by its weight presses downward, appear lighter. But it would be a great mistake to raise this sequence of colors to the dignity of a law. Such a gradation is not necessary, nor have the good and genuine styles of art ever troubled themselves much about it. Nay, they have even not unfrequently selected the ceiling above all other places for the richest decorative display, and have thus made it, not light and airy, but, on the contrary, rather heavy and weighty. In Pompeian wall-decoration, black is not only the color of the dado, but also of the frieze, and sometimes even of the

whole wall. (See Plate IV.) It would be much easier to establish the proposition, that where floor, wall, and ceiling differ in color, an equal strength of their tones, or in other words the same proportion of light and of dark color, would be necessary to produce harmony. But even this proposition cannot be absolutely accepted.

Treatment of the floor.

One thing, however, may be reasonably affirmed, namely, that the floor should not be kept too light. It is not only unpleasant in itself to have the light thrown into the eye from below upward by a broad surface of considerable brightness, but it must also be considered that the floor is the foundation upon which the whole decoration rests. Consequently, if it is to produce the impression of repose and security, it must be neither too rich, nor too gaudy, nor too light; for as that which is light in color corresponds to that which is light in form, so does that which is dark in color correspond to that which is solid. For this reason we should prefer among our modern parquetry floors those of dark wood to those in which white is used (and indeed with dark walls such floors become a necessity), and in carpets limit the use of whites and grays as much as possible, altogether discarding those which are wholly gray or grayish white. Harsh and striking contrasts of color upon the floor should be avoided; for it is not fitting that that which is upon the ground should attract the eye and occupy the attention. The floor must not be neglected; it must play its part in the general harmony of colors, — for this will not bear to have anything overlooked, — but it must do so quietly and unobtrusively.

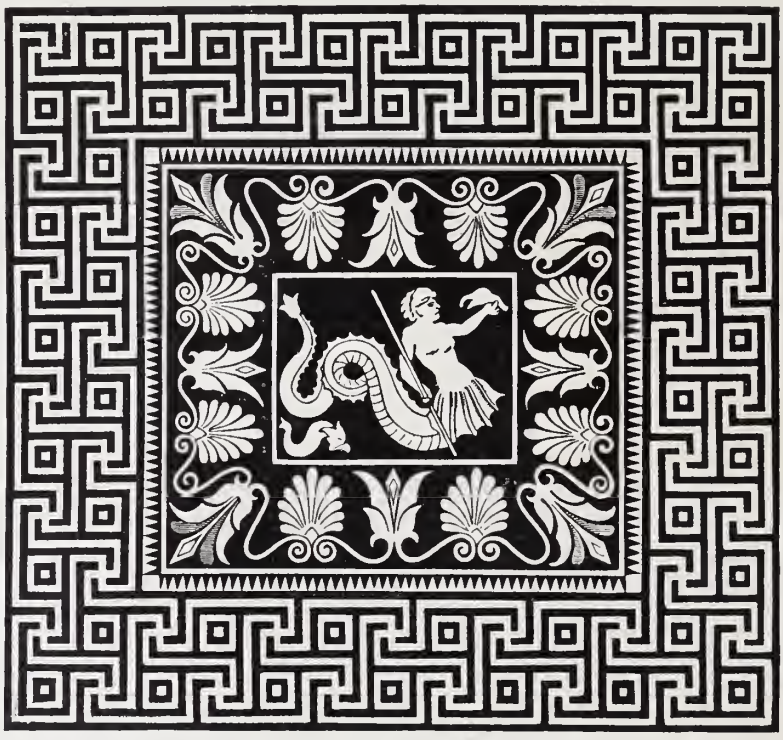
Floors ancient and modern.

But although this end may be accomplished with any material, none can insure one from missing it. The ancients formed their mosaics of colored stones combined into regular patterns, and in the many examples still extant, we generally find all the requirements of color as well as of ornamental composition satisfactorily fulfilled. (Fig. 104.) The modern Italians make their floors of small, irregular fragments of variously colored stones, generally without any definite pattern. Such a floor is durable, and well suited to the climate, but to

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the eye it is not agreeable, owing to its unquiet and motley effect. For us Northerners ornamental parquetry floors and carpets are of greater artistic importance, the former always modest and subdued in effect, while the latter are capable of developing the greatest brilliancy of color. To these may be added, although their use is more restricted, slabs of stone of various colors, and, of late years, tiles of enamelled faïence.

Fig. 104.



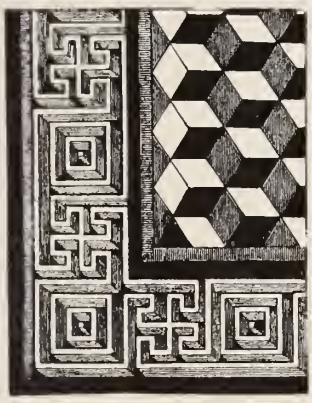
All of them are really amenable to the same laws, in so far as these laws grow out of the qualities peculiar to the floor.

Conditions to be considered.

The floor is, in the first place, a flat surface, and as this surface is to be trodden upon, and is to receive the objects which are placed upon it, practical reasons alone would demand that it be perfectly smooth and even. The floor, therefore, will not admit of any real relief. It follows that rugs with flowers, animals, and other objects worked in

relief in worsted, such as are often seen nowadays, and are frequently given as tokens of friendship, are utterly inadmissible. Again, the floor, by its ornamentation, must not deceive the eye of him who walks upon it, so as perhaps to make him believe that he is stepping over heights and into hollows. This would excite a feeling of discomfort and insecurity, which we decidedly prefer to be free from in our homes. We must therefore pronounce against all compositions which produce the effect of relief, or at least against those which produce it very decidedly, and still more against those which are purposely calculated to deceive. This reminds us of those marble pavements at Rome and at Pompeii (see Plate V., B, and Fig. 105) in which white and black, or light and dark, pieces of marble are so combined as to represent lights and shadows. What is the effect produced by such a pavement? We seem to be treading on sharp points and angles, and although we may overcome this impression through habit and reflection, the result is still a perpetual torment to the eye. Our modern makers of parquetry floors therefore commit a great mistake, — pardonable, at best, in the Rococo, with its whims and caprices, — when they return to and imitate such designs.

Fig. 105.



Defective pavements.

But the logic of our proposition leads us still farther. Having rejected all drawing in decided relief, it follows as a consequence that we must also condemn all pictorial representations which aim at the imitation of reality. We allude here above all to the representation of figures. It is unnatural, and therefore also contrary to style and taste, to ask us to walk upon living creatures. That which the foot does not touch in reality, it ought likewise to shun in pictorial representations. Unfortunately our modern carpet-weavers still endeavor to compel us to place our feet on lions, tigers, dogs,

Condemned designs.

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and other wild as well as tame animals. They also now and then spread out before us romantic love-scenes, such as tourists are wont to carry about on their carpet-bags; yea, they do not even shrink from exposing the portraits of celebrated men, and of crowned heads, to unpleasant contact with most profane boots and shoes. Setting aside the fact that these figures, as far as their artistic execution is concerned, are at the best insufferable, owing to their spotty appearance and their broken, stair-like outlines, which are unavoidable in the process by which they are produced, their position on the floor at the same time brings us into conflict, not only with our æsthetic conscience, but also with our feelings of loyalty, and puts our sense of propriety and of reverence to a severe test.

Mosaic pictures in pavements.

In this respect even the antique mosaics were not always better. Conscious of their skill, the ancient mosaicists attempted even the grandest historical subjects, as we see for example in the celebrated *Battle of Alexander*. (See Plate XXXII.) It is indeed said that this stone picture was found in a protected spot, where the foot never trod; but if so, it was a work of art by itself, and no longer a piece of decoration. How exceedingly unpleasant, and even repulsive, such pavements may become, is shown to us by a large mosaic in the Museum of the Lateran at Rome, which represents a large number of single gladiators the size of life. It is certainly a late work, for only a degenerate, not to say barbaric, taste, could have tolerated such a subject constantly under the eyes and feet. The celebrated and often repeated representation of doves drinking from a vase is of a more agreeable nature, but this also should have been placed before the eye rather than under foot. (Fig. 106.) We must also condemn another famous mosaic, executed by the artist Sosus in a house at Pergamus, which represented the remains and sweepings of a meal, lying about on the floor as if they had been left there by accident. Very naturally the impression produced was that of untidiness, and the picture therefore won for the building the name of the unswept house.



THE BATTLE OF ALEXANDER AND DARIUS.

(Part of a Mosaic found at Pompeii.)

Carpets of vicious design.

We, with our carpets, which allow of a much richer display of colors than that which the old mosaicists had at their command, have also gone much farther than they did, in a certain direction. We have indeed left grand historical painting to the Gobelins, but in lieu thereof the English and French carpet-manufacturers are wont to look upon the whole kingdom

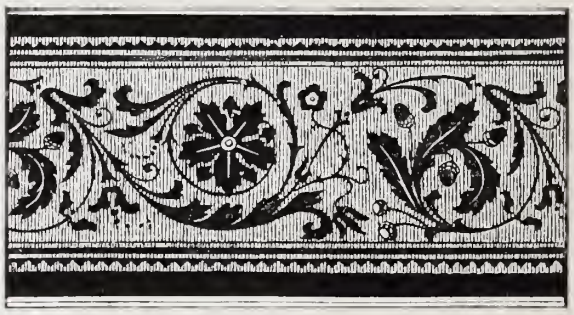
Fig. 106.



of nature as their domain. As we Europeans cannot live *beneath* palm-trees, we are at least to have the privilege of walking *upon* them. Not only meadows and flower-beds are spread out under our feet, but even whole gardens, tropical plants in great luxuriance, and trees with all their ramification of twigs and branches. We live in and upon the boughs like the birds of the sky, and look down through the foliage into

the blue of heaven. If these inventions of the nineteenth century, of which we were even quite proud for a time, do not signify an aberration of taste, then we have certainly never deviated from the right road. To the same category belongs the surfeit of flowers, with which we have been blessed. It was not sufficient to cover the whole floor with them in wild, highly colored masses; the forget-me-nots must needs be magnified to the size of roses, the roses expanded until they were as large as gigantic cabbage-heads, and between them must be placed those scrolls of voluted and twisted mouldings which the French Baroque style of the seventeenth century had introduced into ornamentation. Carpets of this description, with their loud and vulgar effects, necessarily destroyed the harmony of a room completely. As the floor is nothing but the quiet basis for the rest of the decoration, imagine the pitch to which walls and ceiling would have had to be heightened, to hold their own against a carpet of this sort!

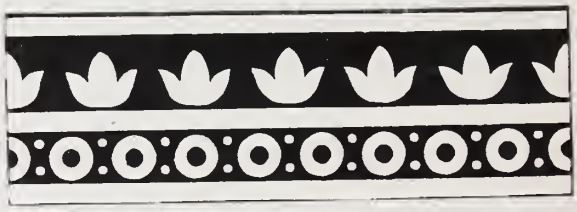
Fig. 107.



Laws deducible from the nature of the floor.

In contrast with such extravagance and perversion, let us now examine the simple laws which may be deduced from the nature of the floor. We have a flat, regularly bounded surface to deal with. The boundary must be emphasized artistically, and we are therefore compelled to make use of a border, which, as it runs around the whole surface, consequently seems to require a running ornament. (Fig. 107.) But the ornament of the border may also be without any specific

Fig. 108.



A border obligatory, and its proper treatment.

direction; it may be composed of separate elements simply strung together (Fig. 108), such as leaves placed alongside of one another, with their points turned away from the centre, so as to indicate the outer termination. This border, again, demands an enclosing member of some kind, such as a seam along each of its sides, that is to say, a narrow band, either ornamented, or distinguished by a different color, or, in its most primitive form, a line only. This would give us the simplest organization of the border as a marginal or boundary ornament. But in its richer development it may also be expanded into a system of bands and stripes, or the corners may be emphasized by special ornamentation, while the middle of the sides may also be marked ornamentally, although the latter proceeding is rather dangerous, and apt to lead into error. This is the system followed by our modern carpet-weavers, when they attempt compositions in the style of the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Classical examples of a rich and yet subdued and stylistic treatment of the border may be found among the ancient mosaics, but above all, and more in accordance with modern feeling, among Indian (Fig. 109) and Persian rugs (Fig. 110).

Fig. 109.

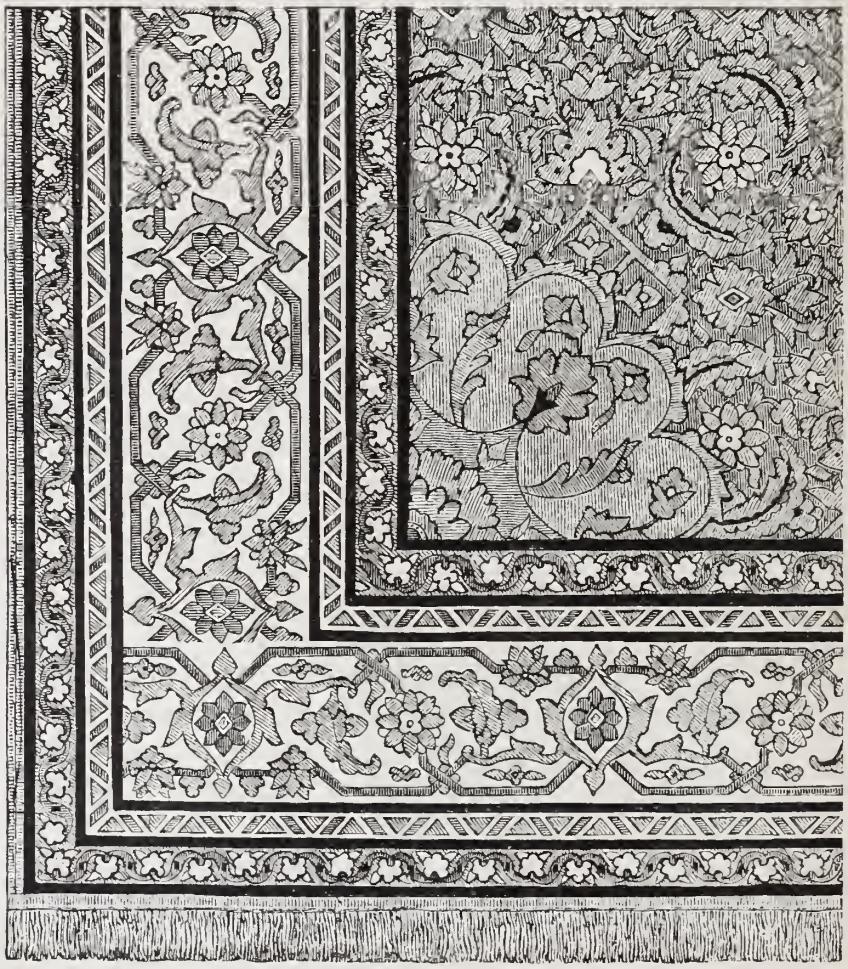


This need of a border shows us that the parquetry-makers of to-day fall into error when they content themselves with setting a large ornamental design in the centre of their more elaborate floors, while they totally neglect the margin. There is always something lacking in such a floor; the composition is incomplete, it is æsthetically unsatisfac-

Modern parqueted floors.

tory. The evil is not so great when the whole surface is uniformly covered with tiles of various colors, or with an indifferent, unobtrusive diaper-pattern, for in that case the color alone, and not the composition, is of importance. This solution of the problem, although not in itself objection-

Fig. 110.



able, is still more or less imperfect, and is therefore more suitable for those parts of the house which serve only as passageways, or for transient occupation, such as corridors and antechambers. In our climate, moreover, stone floors

and faïence tiles are not to be recommended for living-rooms.

Decoration of the space within the border. Oriental and European systems.

Next to the ornamented enframing border the enclosed space also demands fitting decoration. In such decoration either of two systems may be followed, which may be defined as the Oriental and the European. According to the European system the centre is marked by a rich design, round or oval, as the shape of the room may demand, the decorated frame of which points outward, toward the border. In contrast to this, other ornaments spring from the four corners, which in their turn point inward, towards the centre. The remaining space is filled by some regular pattern, evenly distributed, which serves as a ground for the more elaborately ornamented parts. The Oriental system, on the contrary, does not attempt to give prominence to special parts, or to indicate any special direction. It simply covers the surface with some closely set floral or geometrical ornament, more or less regularly arranged, the only aim of which is to enliven the floor-space agreeably by means of a colored but subdued harmony. The genuine carpet-weaver of Smyrna indeed goes so far as to renounce all regular ornamental patterns, contenting himself with the production of a certain pleasing effect, by distributing his colors in small, absolutely irregular patches.

Mode of application.

Both systems are correct, and appropriate for the modern house, but we shall do well to make a distinction in our mode of applying them. For small carpets which do not cover the whole room, and especially for rooms which are crowded with furniture, the Oriental method would seem to be the best, as in such rooms a systematic design would not under any circumstances be able to produce its proper effect. In such cases it will therefore be best to employ some pattern of rather a neutral character, so that only the color or tone shall make itself felt in the general harmony. But the more artistic compositions executed on the European system may also be used properly and to advantage, wherever the eye can take them in fully, as, for example, in apartments of state, or in rooms in which the central space is not covered up by furniture.

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Possible combination of the two systems.

But it is furthermore possible to combine the two systems most happily. Either the quiet and more subdued, but nevertheless richer Oriental coloring may be adapted to the European composition, so that the systematic design may appear less prominently, or else the Oriental design, together with its color, may be combined with the European arrangement. Both methods are indeed employed by the carpet-manufacturers of our day, and their best and most satisfactory productions are based upon this combination of the Oriental and the European system.

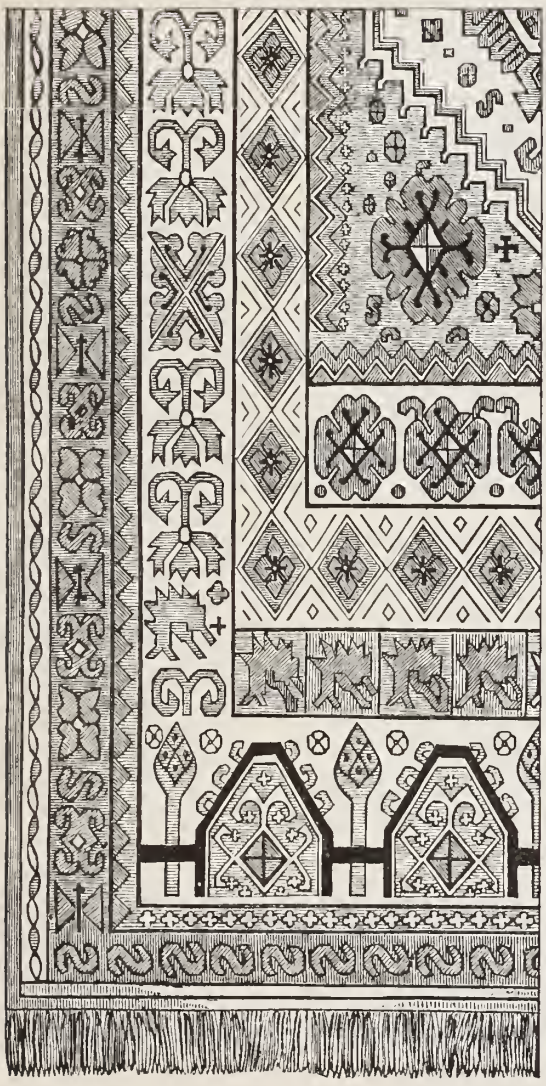
But it cannot be denied that, after all, such satisfactory specimens are still the exception. Fashion, supported by direct efforts, is tending slowly towards Orientalism in decoration, but our modern ornamentists find it exceedingly difficult to enter into its spirit. They must renounce two ideas, with which they have been born, and upon which nevertheless rests the essential difference between the two styles, — the accidental irregularity of nature, and the imitation of relief by means of lights and shadows. This European method is seemingly much freer than the other, and yet it is in reality much more constrained. It compels the designer to use certain definite colors, and these colors must necessarily be considerably reduced in effect by the added shadows; it also compels him to use an excess of green, a color which harmonizes well with but few other colors, and ought therefore to be used only very sparingly for purposes of color. The Oriental artist, on the contrary, draws the flower in profile, or changes it by making it symmetrical and conventional; by so doing he frees himself from nature, and rises into the realm of imagination, or of true art, which unites freedom and law; he frees himself from all restraint as to the choice of color, of form, and of composition. At the same time, in renouncing the relief produced by lights and shadows he remains rigidly true to the decorative principle of the flat surface which the floor demands, but which is invariably violated, to a greater or less degree, by all European designers.

As a matter of course, the ornamentation of carpets is not

Ornament influenced by the nature of the material employed.

limited to floral forms, nor does Orientalism so limit itself. (Fig. 111.) It is the nature of his material which leads the mosaicist to geometrical ornament, and the same species of decoration in its richer development is necessarily also congenial to the carpet, which more especially offers a good field for the employment of the arabesque. But even in this direction we must not go too far. All specifically architectural ornament must be avoided, and it is totally false to endeavor to establish a certain reciprocity between ceiling and floor, by repeating on the latter the same ornamentation which appears on the former. The climax of all error is reached, however, when the stucco-ornaments of the ceiling are reproduced "en grisaille" on the floor, as if a room were made to be turned upside down at will. I would not mention this absurdity, which seems incredible, if it had not actually occurred in Vienna. All laws are here sinned

Fig. 111.



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against. In the first place, the fundamental principles of ornamentation are confounded; then, again, gray is not a color for the floor; and, finally, the ornamentation in relief which has purposely been attempted must needs mislead the eye. In preparing designs for the floor it should always be remembered that the key of color must be rich but quiet; that the patterns must be adapted to a flat, enclosed space; and, finally, that as the design is to be placed under our feet, it must contain nothing which nature or a feeling of propriety forbids us to tread upon. Among these things we must even class coats-of-arms, which, in accordance with true heraldic feeling, would rather be dishonored than honored in such a position. The shield should be held aloft, not trampled in the dust.

The wall.

Turning our attention now to the treatment of the wall, we shall again have to start from the same fundamental idea of an enclosed flat surface, although this idea does not apply as strictly to the wall as it does to the floor. Some of the historical styles, or we may indeed say all, have treated the interior walls of larger and more elaborate buildings architecturally, dividing and organizing them, in the style in which the buildings themselves were executed, by means of projecting and retreating members, thus imparting life to the long perspectives, not only by color, but also by lights and shadows. This mode of ornamentation becomes a sort of æsthetic necessity in long galleries and corridors, or in vaulted chambers in which the pilasters serve also as piers to support the vaults, thus producing the impression of strength and security. The later Gothic style lined the wall with wood, panelled it, and developed the panelling into a system, with reference to the need of cabinets, niches, etc., by introducing pilaster-strips, cornices, bases, and framework. This system was adopted by the Renaissance, which changed only the profiles and the ornamentation. But the Renaissance furthermore developed the richest architectural organization of the inner wall, by introducing projecting pillars and pilasters, which served to support the beams of the ceiling, and framed

The Renaissance system.



WALL-DECORATION IN THE LOGGIA OF THE VILLA MADAMA.

square or arched niches, after the manner of the more luxurious buildings of the ancient Romans. To complete this decoration, the niches must necessarily be filled with sculptured figures and vases. (See Plate XXXIII.) Even with these, however, the Renaissance did not rest contented. Following older examples, it formed the architectural parts of stones of various colors, especially of precious marbles, or at least covered them with these materials, and called on historical and decorative wall-painting to enrich certain spaces especially assigned to it. The styles of art succeeding the Renaissance remained true to this method, changing only the forms of the details, or giving more or less prominence to the various members, according to their own artistic character. Modern art likewise followed the lead of the Renaissance in the solution of problems of a higher nature, but owing to the indecision caused by its want of a distinct guiding principle, it gave preference sometimes to picturesque, sometimes to architectural decoration, and thus occasionally suffered the equilibrium between the associated arts to be disturbed.

Constructive, pictorial, and plastic elements of mural decoration.

The fact is, as our first division has already shown us, that the association of the three arts, architecture, painting, and sculpture, is an inevitable necessity, whenever decorative problems of the highest order are to be solved. In rooms of state, devoted to public purposes, this will always be the case. In private living-rooms, however, it is otherwise. Our first care must be not to make a monumental work of art of the dwelling-house, and this one consideration alone would compel us to impose certain limitations upon the decoration. We must also remember that the walls do not exist for their own sake, that they are not simply convenient places for the unrestricted display of art, but that they must be treated with regard to certain other considerations, which do not grow out of their own nature. These considerations are partly of a practical kind. There is the furniture, which must be placed against the wall, there are pictures and other objects of art, which are to be set against it. The wall must therefore either be arranged beforehand so as to accommodate particular objects

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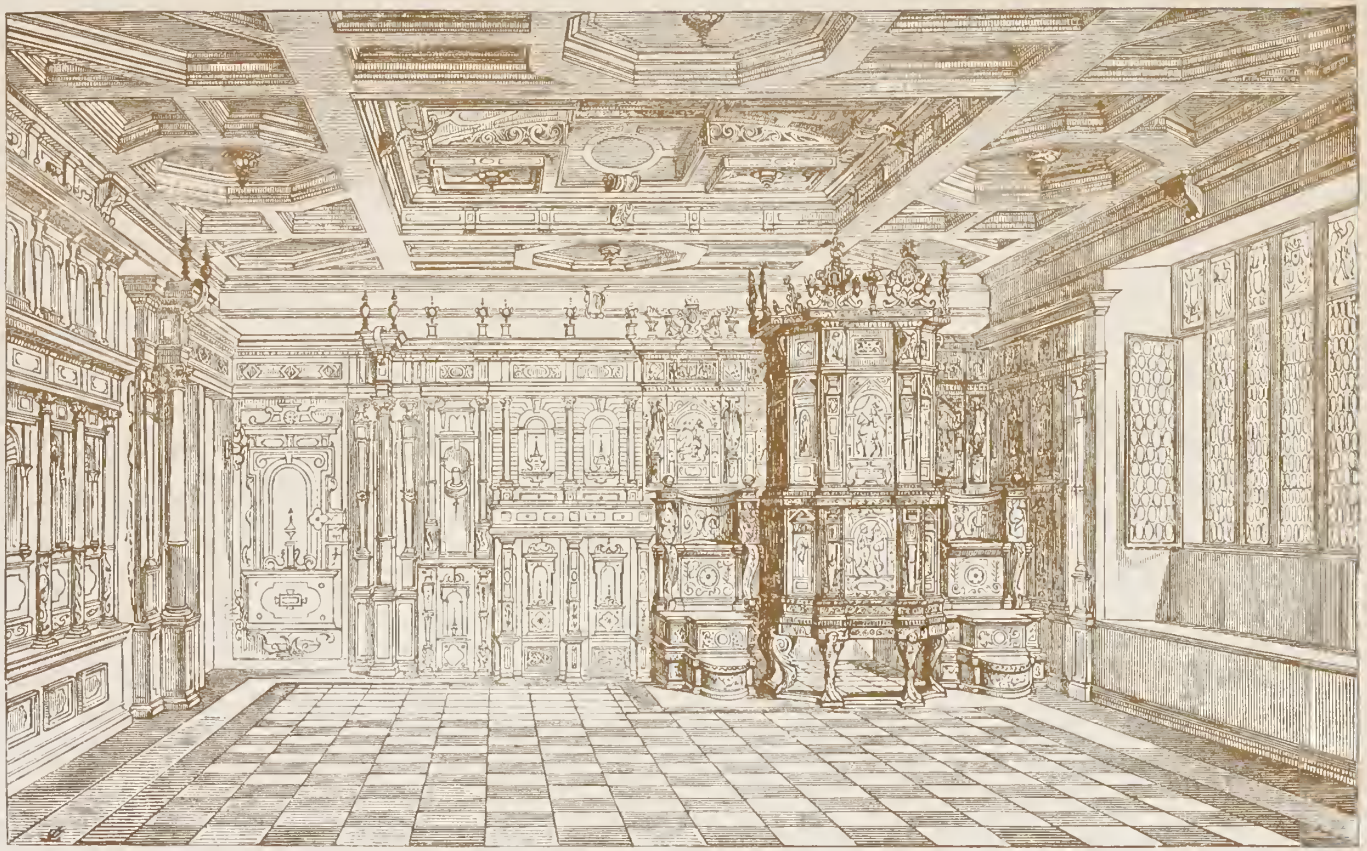
of this kind, or it must allow a certain freedom of alteration, and must not interfere with the movable nature of the furniture. The architectural members, which the size of the room may sometimes make desirable, must not project too far, and must never take the form of full pillars or columns, but must only be indicated sufficiently to mark their decorative character. Those places, furthermore, which are destined to receive pictorial decoration should be so situated that they may not be encroached upon, or perhaps even cut into halves, or otherwise injured in effect by the furniture. The destination and the arrangement of the room will, however, permit of a difference in treatment. In a ball-room, for instance, which has usually only low seats running round the wall, decorative figure-paintings may be carried lower down than in ordinary rooms, where the walls are partially hidden by sideboards, bookcases, writing-desks, and "étagères."

Architectural members.

The same considerations must be kept in view when dealing with decoration in relief, whether it consist of figures or of ornament. Whenever the architect uses figures in the round for interior decoration he must take care so to place them, be it in niches or on pedestals, that they may neither interfere with the freedom of motion in the room, nor be themselves endangered. For the same reason relief should not be too projecting. It is best not to be too lavish with carving in living-rooms. If too rich and too intricate, it disturbs the repose of the room, and injures itself by destroying the clearness and effect of the arrangement; it catches the dust, renders cleaning a matter of extreme difficulty, and is itself continually in peril. There are certain styles which necessitate carving, whenever they aim at richness and splendor. This is true, for instance, of the later Gothic, which, however, frequently did too much of a good thing in this direction. But whenever carved ornament becomes a necessity, let it be principally confined to the apartments of state, which are less frequently used, and keep it strictly within bounds in the living-rooms proper. The French Baroque period, and more especially the Rococo, used likewise to overload rooms and furniture with the gilt carved work of

Decoration in relief.

Carved ornament.



ROOM IN THE "SEIDENHOF," ZURICH.

its absurd scrolls and with its intricate shell-work, so that those who enter these rooms feel positively uncomfortable. In old castles of the end of the seventeenth or the beginning of the eighteenth century there are generally still to be found some small cabinets which are wholly overrun by this kind of ornament. The impression produced by them is that of mere show-pieces, which really ought to be kept framed and under glass.

Fig. 112.



In this respect the Renaissance was far more modest and restrained. The early Italian Renaissance, which as a rule preferred a flat and picturesque ornamentation to strongly projecting architectural decoration, had a partiality indeed for carved or sculptured ornament; but the exceedingly graceful forms and the low relief employed make it evident that the artists were fully aware of its true limitations. (Fig. 112.) The later Renaissance again emphasized and strengthened the architectural parts as compared to the ornamental. In Germany, as has before been remarked, it developed the panelled walls of the Gothic style, but generally contented itself with giving greater projection to the enframing mem-

Renaissance mural ornament.

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bers and the cornices. Only in isolated cases, of which some very remarkable specimens remain, did it overlay the whole surface of the wall, frames as well as panels, with figure ornamentation, which here and there consisted of reliefs in ivory or alabaster.

Such rooms, notwithstanding the warm and agreeable tints of the wood, do not impress us as comfortable and homelike. They have become works of art, which ask us to gaze at them in wonder and admiration, but which are not fit to be quietly enjoyed and actually occupied. (See Plate XXXIV.)

The fundamental idea of this decoration, that is to say, the wainscoting and dividing of the wall, is by no means inadmissible in our modern dwellings. On the contrary, such a wall unites so many artistic and practical advantages, that the only cause of regret is its costliness, which prevents a general return to it. The brown color of the wood, whether darker or lighter, produces an impression of intellectual as well as physical comfort. It furnishes an admirable background for furniture and all kinds of movable ornaments. Wainscoted rooms, if the furniture is correctly chosen, and especially if it is not too puerile and characterless, have a grave and quiet air, one might say a sort of noble dignity, which renders them especially well fitted for dining-rooms, gentlemen's apartments, and cosey drinking-rooms. (See Plate XXXV.) The wainscoted wall also unites admirably well with pictorial decoration, either in the shape of easel-pictures or of mural painting. For this purpose the panelling should not be carried up to the ceiling, but a frieze-like strip should be left above the cornice with which the wood-work is finished off. The height of this cornice must depend upon the beauty of the proportions, but in fixing the height, as well as the architectural divisions, the size and the height of the furniture must also be taken into account, as the pilaster-strips and the framework project beyond the plane of the wall.

Modern adaptation.

In our ordinary dwellings, however, these considerations do not generally apply. Walls decorated architecturally and in relief are an exception, as compared in numbers, to painted

Modern walls generally colored.

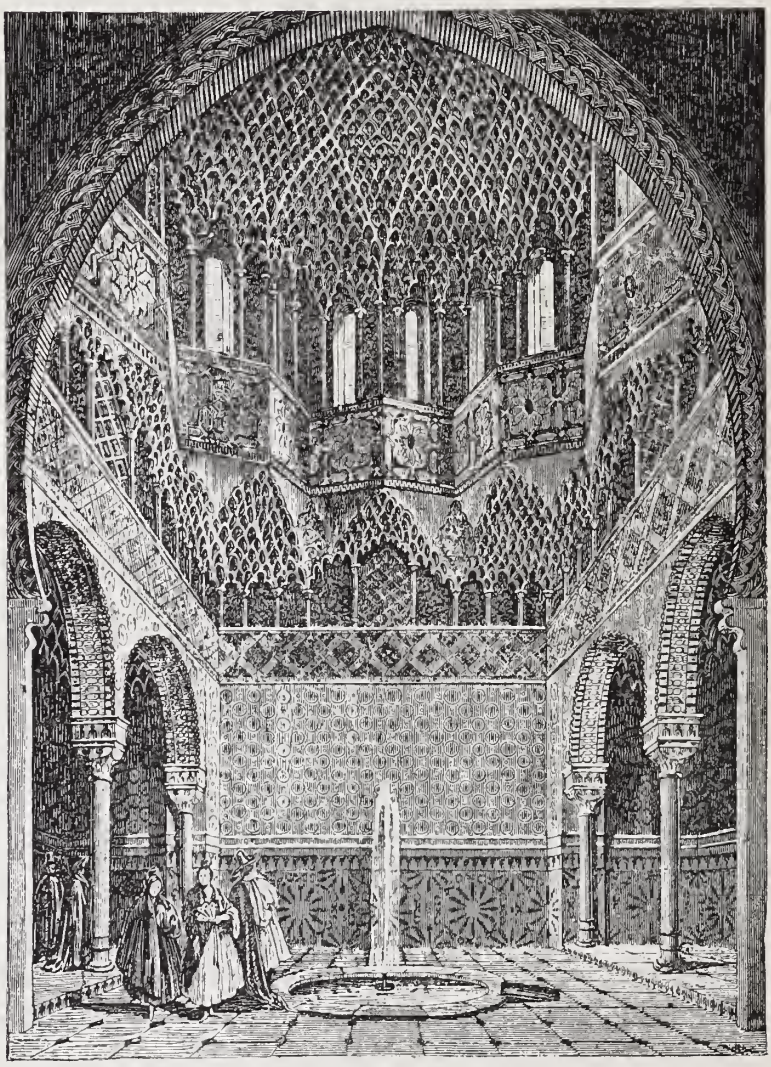


GERMAN INTERIOR IN THE STYLE OF THE 16TH CENTURY

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blue, red, and gold, that is to say, in the most effective, unbroken colors. With the exception of a few low divans and a few rugs, these halls evidently contained only very little or

Fig. 113.



perhaps no furniture at all, and certainly none of the sculptured or painted enrichments with which modern apartments of state are ornamented. It was therefore quite necessary to

lavish upon the walls and ceilings that pomp and splendor which Oriental imagination and the dignity of a royal residence required. We may imitate such decoration, but whenever we do so we must dispense with our modern works of art. For the dwelling-houses of to-day the quiet, low-toned wall will be found preferable in most cases, while the richer forms of decoration must be reserved for rooms in which we do not intend to hang pictures and place other objects of art upon the walls, or to those apartments which are intended for festivities rather than for quiet occupation.

Fig. 114.



Should the coloring of the wall be light or dark in tone?

The second question which forces itself upon our attention, and which has in some measure become a vital one, concerns the color of the wall: Shall it be light or dark? Up to within a few years this question was hardly ever asked. All feeling for and all delight in color had indeed been lost as far back as the end of the last century, and only those wall-decorations were considered to be refined and elegant which were executed either in neutral gray or in broken colors verging on gray. Greenish gray, violet gray, reddish gray, light drab, — these were our favorite colors; and the fainter the shade, the better. Garlands and

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flowers were occasionally tolerated on such a background, but they were hard, clumsy, and vulgar in the usual examples, while in those of a more aristocratic character they were so delicate and airy that one might often be tempted to call them sentimental. This giving up of strong and healthy colors, this transition to weakly, faded, and washed-out tints, dates, in fact, from the sufficiently well-known period of literary sentimentalism of the second half of the last century, which preferred a slight touch with the tips of the fingers to a hearty shake of the hand. We have outlived this period, but all enjoyment of color is dead. Up to the present day, whenever we desire to make our drawing-rooms especially aristocratic, we choose a dazzling white wall, and endeavor to place as much gold as possible, in the way of gilded mouldings and cornices, mirror and picture frames, girandoles, etc., in contrast with it. Add to this a white stove, a loud, gaudy carpet ornamented with flowers, furniture coverings of dark velvet or of glossy silk in a single brilliant color, and, to crown the whole, a white ceiling with an imitation of stucco painted in gray, and you have what was for many years, and in many places still is, the ideal of our time. And yet this ideal is made up of nothing but crudities and mistakes. Gold more than anything else demands a deep and full color as a background, and the more lavishly it is used the deeper and fuller must be the color. Any colored ornamentation, no matter how harmonious it may be in itself, must be carried up to a higher and stronger scale as soon as gold is added. But in our modern drawing-rooms, as just described, gold is opposed only to white, the negation of all color, and with this white the furniture likewise contrasts in the most disagreeable manner.

Modern indifference to color.

Our false ideal.

Thank Heaven, we are at last returning from our predilection for gray and white to healthier colors, and with this reaction the question again recurs as to the color of the wall: Shall it be light or dark? Let us reject rooms which are too sombre, which impress us with a feeling of gravelike darkness, without further consideration; color must retain its character

as color, it must not be made to appear black. But for the same reason we must also declare against walls of a very light color, for here again color cannot produce its proper effect, and becomes incapable of expressing the character which we may desire to impart to the room, be it grave or gay, cosey or stately. It is an exceedingly difficult problem, very rarely solved successfully, to give to a room decorated in light colors that poetical charm, that unconsciously captivating magical power, which in pictures the Germans call "mood" (Stimmung), because it corresponds to, and calls up, certain moods of the mind. Not even that which is called *tone* in a picture, and which in a room is almost identical with harmony, can be reached with light walls, as color is absolutely necessary to produce it. But a light wall has still another disadvantage. All the pictures, vases, figures, and other objects of art which we are wont to look upon as indispensable, appear crude upon it, and produce an unquiet effect. They do not unite with the background to produce a harmonious whole: the dark objects look like spots and holes in the wall; the light ones are not relieved, they do not "come out," as the painters say. It is the same with the people in the room. Light walls are not advantageous to beautiful and interesting faces; their full effect is brought out only by dark walls. For the same reason painters prefer dark to light backgrounds for their portraits.

Special difficulties to be met in dealing with a room decorated in light colors.

Taking all these considerations into account, we shall find it advisable to use color rather boldly in our dwellings. In saying this, we do not mean to recommend such a use of unbroken colors as is made on the walls of the Alhambra, but to suggest that the entire realm of hues and shades should be given up to the decorative fancy, only stipulating that in the fundamental colors or keynotes of the whole, black shall be as carefully avoided on the one hand as white on the other. How nearly we can approach the extremes of dark and light will again depend upon the character which we wish to impart to the room, upon its destination, and upon extraneous conditions. To the color of the various rooms, as far as it

Bold use of color recommended.

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is dependent on their uses, we shall have to recur later; the extraneous conditions here alluded to are especially those of sufficient or insufficient daylight. In the narrow streets of our large cities, in houses of four or five stories, a lack of light is more common than an excess, and we shall therefore be justified in such cases in choosing light rather than dark tints, so as to avoid the impression of gloominess. But artistic considerations alone should be allowed, fearlessly and without regard to light or dark, to determine our course, whenever there is a sufficiency of light, or when the rooms are destined to be mainly used in the evening with artificial illumination.

Choice of colors to be determined by artistic considerations alone.

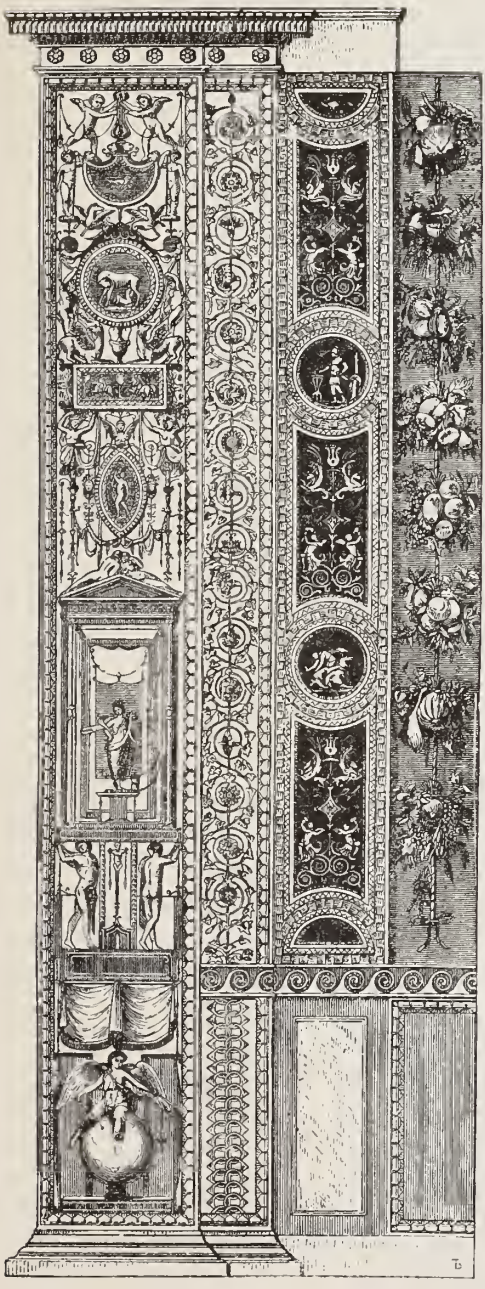
The same considerations should also decide the choice of the leading color, and of the other colors which are to be opposed to or associated with it in the ornamentation, so as to produce the necessary variety in harmony. But in the present state of science it is exceedingly difficult to lay down definite rules, for those which have heretofore been laid down have nearly all been set aside again, while, on the other hand, the possibility of combination is almost infinite. In such things we must be governed by taste, trained by practice and experience, by our own cultivated feeling, and we must above all things constantly bear in mind that no *one* color ever produces an effect by itself alone, and that a color may be out of place, however beautiful it may be in itself. In decoration one color necessarily depends on the other, and all objects, furniture and walls, carpet and ceiling, exercise a reciprocal effect. Whosoever chooses the color for one of these must at the same time keep in view all the rest. It is only the successful combination of the whole which can lead to character, to harmony, to beauty, and this is the end of all decoration.

Nature and design of the decoration.

Coming, finally, to the question as to the nature and the design of the decoration, to the ornamental or pictorial ornamentation of the wall, we shall probably agree that simply to color or tint it will in no wise answer our artistic requirements. Be the wall white or red, we shall nevertheless be seized by

the *horror vacui;* the bare flat space stares at us with its voidness; it needs to be ornamented. And even if we had a sufficient number of costly easel-pictures to cover it with, these would not satisfy the demand, for the wall has its own rights, which must be respected.

Fig. 115.



The wall must be separated from the floor and the ceiling.

To give to the wall a certain independence and finish, it will be necessary to separate it from the floor as well as from the ceiling. This separation is made apparent by the base below, by the frieze or border above. The border may be carried around the four walls under the ceiling, in the manner usually adopted at present; but a perfectly artistic arrangement demands that the separation of the individual walls should also be indicated, and this can be done by allowing the border to run down, or rather up, the sides. In this case, however, great care should be taken that the ornament of the border does not run counter to its natural direction, that

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it does not stand on its head, for instance, or hang downward, while it should run upward. If the borders and the friezes are increased in width and in richness, they afford an exceedingly favorable field to an artistic imagination for the development of its most charming and beautiful creations. The first artists of the world have not disdained to undertake this kind of decoration, as we see in the exquisitely charming arabesques of Raphael in the Loggie (Fig. 115), and in the creations of his pupils, such as Giulio Romano, Giovanni da Udine, and Luca Penni. In these arabesques and decorations there lies treasured up an inexhaustible store of ideas of never-fading beauty, and our modern artists need only to extend their hands to avail themselves of the richness of these eternal fountains.

Arabesques of the sixteenth century.

No limits are here imposed upon the inventive and creative faculties, save those which arise from extraneous considerations and the harmony of the whole. The base, on the contrary, being the foundation from which springs the ornamental life, must be treated more simply and in most cases in fact quite simply. This is also made necessary by a consideration of a practical nature. On Pompeian walls we shall indeed find the base developed into an important part of the decoration, bearing not only ornaments, but even small figure-paintings; but then in Pompeii that was more admissible than with us, as the wall was not so covered up by furniture. We like a certain abundance of objects of all kinds in our rooms, and these generally conceal the base almost completely. But it will not do to introduce elaborate ornamentation where it must necessarily be covered up or cut into, so that it can either produce no effect at all, or, which is worse, can only be seen piecemeal.

Treatment of the wall base.

Next to the ornamental frame or border we must now consider the decoration of the broad space enclosed by them. This brings us into the special domain of our modern wall-paper manufacturers, whose products during the last decades have not unfrequently filled us with a slight feeling of horror, and which, instead of making our modest dwelling cosey and

Decoration of the central space.

comfortable as it should be, have made it dismal and uncomfortable. And how did they manage to do this? By covering the wall with dark or highly colored ornaments, set upon a light ground, which were loud and painfully crude in effect, and by the naturalistic barbarity of their shapeless, inelegant designs, which perpetually bewildered the eye and did not allow it to find the desired rest. Or they gave us in place of flowers, leaves, and vines, sportsmen shooting ducks, beggars lying by the wayside, or amorous pastoral scenes, which in their endless repetition and caricature-like execution became unspeakably wearisome. Or, for a change, fashion took it into its head to cover the wall with nothing but vertical bands and stripes, which were not less uninteresting, wearisome, and annoying. All such mistakes and absurdities can only be avoided by keeping unerringly in mind the real nature of the problem to be solved, and the end to be reached.

Modern errors in treatment.

All that is wanted in most cases where we have recourse to paper-hangings or their painted equivalents as wall-decoration, is a quiet background, a surface agreeably diversified for the eye, which shall be in harmony with the rest of the ornamentation and with the furniture of the room. To this end the wall must not be obtrusive, nor must it fade into nothingness. It demands color, and an enlivening ornament on this color. To obtain this effect it is sufficient to execute the pattern in a darker shade of the same color as the ground. In a large number of cases our modern dwellings require nothing further than this, more especially if the wall is to receive additional decoration in the shape of paintings, prints, or antiquities. But whenever such additional decoration is not intended, and the wall is to be its own ornament, we may proceed to call in other colors to our aid, and may also employ gold to heighten the effect. Gold must, however, be used with judgment; scattered about in small masses, it is apt to produce a dazzling and restless effect, while in broad masses it requires great depth in the other colors. Rightly managed, it is the most effective element in the highest order of decoration.

How to obtain a good result.

Proper use of gilding.

But color is only one of the elements which are conducive

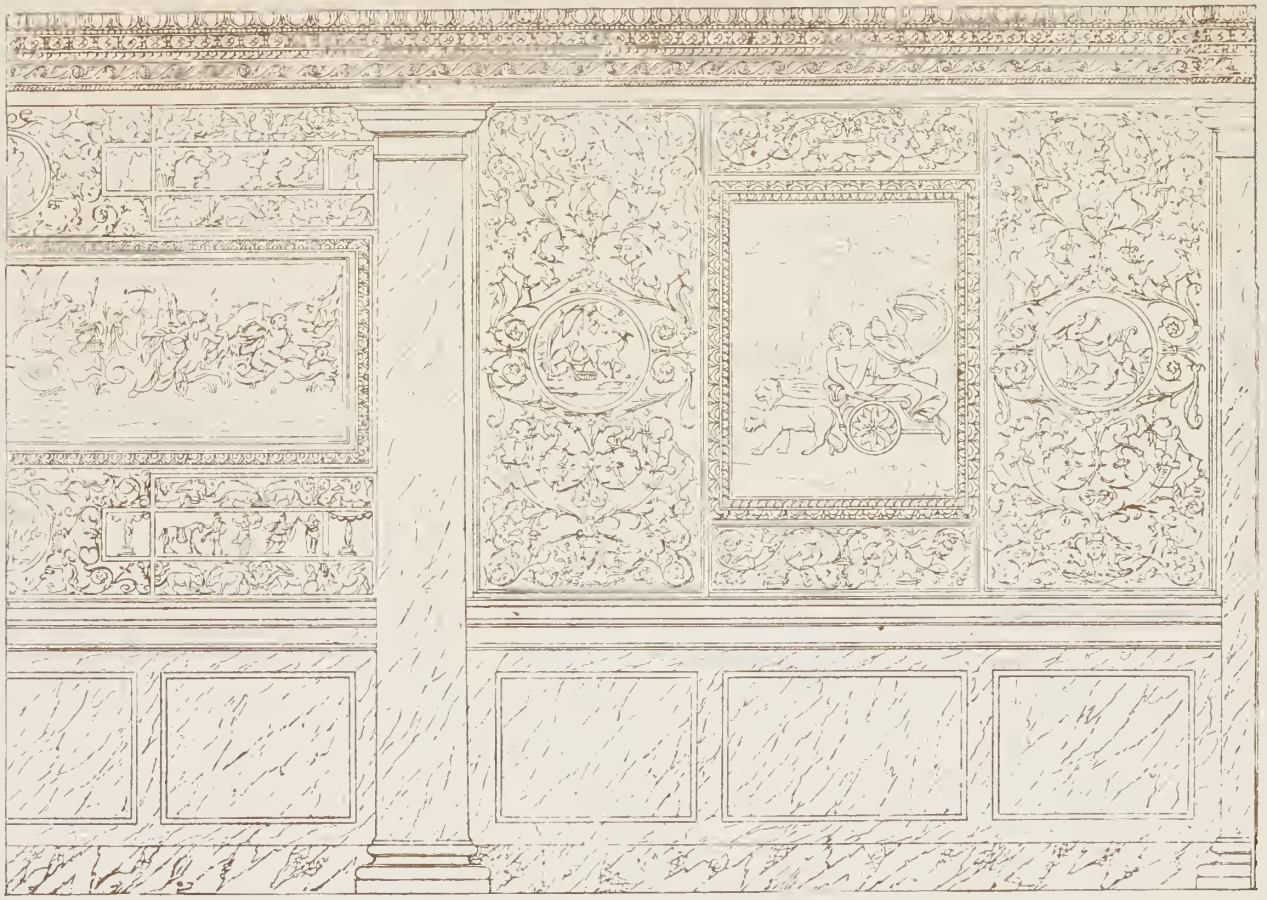
CHAP. VI.

to repose in such a figured surface; the design of the pattern must likewise be, not only beautiful, but above all quiet in character. Seen at some distance, the pattern must blend with the ground into one agreeable, lustrous tint, while at the same time it must, upon closer examination, reveal to the beholder a special beauty of its own; the proportion of its size to that of the wall must be well regulated, and in its distribution over the surface, its closeness or openness, it must also submit to certain definite conditions. Generally speaking, the laws which reign here have been most carefully and wisely obeyed by the Oriental decorative artists of all ages; but the discussion of these laws must be left to special treatises on ornamentation. I will only observe that the artistic aim to be attained is much more difficult to reach by naturalistic decoration than by so-called conventionalized ornament, as the former is beset by obstacles arising out of accidents of color and want of repose in line. A rigid adherence to principle would indeed demand that all but flat, conventionalized ornament should be excluded from mural decoration of this kind.

Oriental observance of decorative laws.

But it is also possible to proceed in quite another manner, for we need not cover the entire surface of the wall with either naturalistic or conventionalized ornament. We may take the architectural wall as our model, and may similarly divide our wall-space by bands or broad pilaster-strips, on which we may introduce ornaments running in an upward direction. This must of course be done, not from the sculptor's or the architect's point of view, but from that of the painter; that is to say, the strips in question must not strive to imitate columns and pilasters by painted lights and shadows. The border may also be carried around the doors, and the spaces above the latter should likewise be defined. This arrangement, in its richer development, may be of itself a sufficient decoration of the wall, but it may also become a great hindrance, if the wall is destined to receive still further ornamentation in the shape of separate paintings or reliefs. In this case the ornaments (paintings, reliefs, etc.) must corre-

Possible modes of treatment.



WALL-DECORATION IN THE PALAZZO DEL T, MANTUA.

spond with each other, and the divisions of the wall must be arranged accordingly, so as to produce a symmetrical, well-proportioned whole. If, on the contrary, the paintings are to be of a decorative nature, and to be executed directly upon the wall, the artist will indeed adopt a similar system of division, but the arrangement of the panels and borders will be left entirely to his own choice. (See Plate XXXVI.) He will find himself in the same position as the artist who executes mural paintings of a higher order, with only this difference, that his style must be lighter, in accordance with the principles which have been discussed before. The art of the Rococo period has left us most charming wall-decorations of this kind, mannered, indeed, like all its creations, and rather cool in the general scale of color, but nevertheless harmonious, and sometimes exceedingly lovely and graceful. Many of the Pompeian mural paintings with their naïve little pictures, simple yet infinitely varied, such as little bits of scenery or single figures, which seem to float on the wall (see tail-piece), are based on the same principle. It is not necessary to decorate our walls with downright imitations of these Pompeian paintings, but we may nevertheless find in them laws and motives which will show us how we ought to treat our rooms according to the rules of genuine decorative art, as distinguished from individual pictures and mural painting of the grand style.

Mural decorations of the Rococo period.

And of the Pompeian, which are especially suggestive.

There is no other manner perhaps which appeals so directly to modern æsthetic feelings. It is thoroughly artistic, and combines decorative general effects of great variety with beauty of detail, grace in drawing, and the fascination of poetic invention. The imaginative artist has here a field as wide and rich and fruitful as that open to the illuminator of manuscripts. Even that which in our modern drawing-rooms usually leads to cold, inartistic, false, and crude effects, that glittering lustre which we pass off as elegance, can be attained by these means, without overstepping the boundaries of art. This end can be reached most satisfactorily by covering the walls with a lustrous, monochromatic silk, and painting immediately upon it.

Walls covered with silk.

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Obstacles to the general use of painted wall-decorations.

As yet, however, there are many obstacles to the universal adoption of the method of wall-decoration described in the previous paragraphs. I do not so much refer to the size of our furniture, although that is one of the obstacles, since a decoration of this kind ought not to be cut into. A greater obstacle is this, that such paintings cannot be executed with the aid of the stencil; they must not look like wall-paper, they ought to be veritable works of art. But our ordinary decorative painters are seldom sufficiently skilled for such work, while the painters of pictures generally look down upon this branch of art as one that is rather beneath their dignity, and to which they are loath to descend. The greatest obstacle of all, however, lies in the fact that the place of decorative painting has been taken by easel-painting, which, together with the collateral reproductive arts, has been developed to an extraordinary degree within the last few centuries. Its numberless products exercise complete control over the wall, so that the decoration of the latter is dependent upon them. But of this more in another chapter.



CHAPTER VII.

MOVABLE WALL ORNAMENTS. — THE CEILING.

IN the previous chapter we investigated the æsthetic laws of mural decoration, without, however, taking into account those ornaments which are hung upon, fastened to, or placed against the wall, such as framed pictures, tapestries, weapons, and other objects of "virtú." We shall now endeavor to discover the laws which govern the arrangement of these objects, and then proceed to discuss the ceiling.

Laws which govern the arrangement of works of art in a room.

If we call to mind the laws to which decorative mural painting is subject, especially in dwelling-rooms; if we remember that, as it does not exist simply for its own sake, it must submit to certain restraints in color and design, resulting from the peculiarities of the room and the exigencies of general harmony, it will almost seem to us as if our modern easel-pictures set all these laws openly at defiance. Such pictures are worked out independently in the studio, without the least reference to the wall which they are destined to ornament; they have their own æsthetic aim, and are unconcerned about that which exists outside of themselves. Necessarily, then, they conflict with the requirements of a flat surface, and it would indeed seem as if the antagonisms arising out of their own nature and the nature of the wall were irreconcilable, since easel-pictures, being themselves representations of reality, demand to be judged absolutely on their own merits and without reference to their surroundings.

Essentially independent character of easel-pictures.

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They are to form part of the decoration of the room, and yet they are isolated, independent works of art, in conception as well as in execution.

Easel-pictures did not enter into mediæval schemes of decoration.

In former times the case was somewhat different. The art of the Middle Ages, which, although frequently imperfect in execution, was nevertheless based upon correct decorative principles, really made no use whatever of independent easel-pictures as wall ornaments. It was left to modern art in its rise and progress to develop the branch of painting to which they belong, and this has now assumed such proportions that there is nothing left but to try to make the best of it. Being obliged to take this species of ornament into our calculations, we must endeavor to enjoy the beauty which it offers us, and reconcile it with our principles as far as possible, or, in other words, strive to use pictures decoratively. To attain this end, we should order and group them according to their color, their general artistic character, and their size, and so bring the color and the design of the wall into harmony with them that the *ensemble*, wall and pictures together, may present the appearance of a flower, or, more properly speaking, of a tastefully arranged bouquet.

How easel-pictures can best be treated as decorative material.

Proper tone of color for the wall.

But it is not always an easy task to do this. It is of the first necessity that the wall should be absolutely quiet in tone, otherwise it will only be a disturbing element through its conflict with the color of the paintings. Furthermore, that it may harmonize in color with all, or with as many of the pictures as possible, it should be of a neutral tint, or of one calculated at least to heighten rather than to lower their effect.[1]

[1] The color of the wall should depend upon the general character of the pictures to be hung upon it One and the same background cannot suit old and new paintings, for which reason they should never be hung side by side. The rich deep tones which time has given to the first are best set off by walls or hangings of a reddish hue, while the yet untempered colors peculiar to the last need to be counteracted and softened by walls less positive in tone, such as pale greens, warm grays, delicate drabs, etc.

If the right color has been given to the wall, it will be possible to enter and leave the room without observing it, unless the attention has been specially called to it. This is the best test of its being what it should be, strictly subordinate to general effect.

Red, that is to say, a dark, broken red, neither too fiery nor too rusty, is recognized as the best color for this purpose. It should properly be of a flat tint, surrounded by a border, without pattern, or at the very utmost have a simple, conventionalized pattern, of the same hue as the ground, only a trifle darker. In general the former will be found to have a more dignified appearance than the latter. Instead of red a decidedly broken and subdued green, something like the color of green tea, or a dark drab, may be advantageously substituted. All other colors must be employed very cautiously in connection with oil-paintings.

Grouping of pictures.

The grouping of the pictures[2] with regard to their own color is likewise of some importance, and this is true more especially of modern pictures, which are always cruder, not to say louder, in their contrasts and combinations of color than old paintings, and generally lack the mild, agreeable harmony of the latter. Whether it be owing to a consciously exercised effort of art, or to age, — probably, however, to both, — certain it is that old paintings, by their character, their softer color, even when combined with great splendor, and their often truly dignified repose, affect an artistically trained eye far more agreeably, and adapt themselves much more readily to the harmony of a room than modern paintings. With a couple of good old portraits of the sixteenth or seventeenth century, a room may be excellently well decorated, provided that their effect is not cancelled by vulgar gaudiness in walls and furniture. In dealing with ordinary modern paintings, such as are generally bought at exhibitions, great care must, however, be taken, if a really decorative effect is desired, not

[2] It is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance of grouping pictures according to their affinities of tone. They are like notes in the musical scale which, unless combined according to certain harmonic laws, produce dissonances. To hang a picture-gallery or a large room satisfactorily is like painting a picture, and, as it demands the most delicate perception of color, is properly artist's work. The many units must be so disposed as to permit the eye to wander from point to point without any sense of abrupt change, just as in looking at a single picture it passes easily from the deepest shadows to the highest lights, thanks to insensible transitions and well-considered juxtapositions of tone.

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The importance of a well-considered juxtaposition of pictures in reference to their affinities of tone.

to bring warm and cold toned, light and dark colored pictures, or those which are relatively inharmonious, into juxtaposition, while the question of size and shape must also be considered in the arrangement of symmetrical groups. All these are things of which the artist in his studio does not, and indeed cannot, think.

Connoisseurs and collectors are but too apt to overlook such considerations. They think of, and enjoy, the beauty of each individual work of art by itself. Their point of view is undoubtedly justifiable in a certain sense, for the easel-picture is painted with this intention, but to be so regarded, its place is on the easel, and not on the wall. So soon as we propose to ornament the wall with it, the decorative stand-point asserts its prescriptive right to be first considered. On the other hand, it would be going too far, if we were to cover up so much of the wall with one or more easel-pictures, as to leave no room for architectural or decorative divisions and borders. This is the case, for example, in the Hall of the Grand Council in the Ducal Palace at Venice, where the Last Judgment, by Tintoretto, entirely covers up one whole wall, while the other is occupied by two pictures of nearly the same colossal size, separated only by narrow gilt mouldings. (See Plate XVI., A.)

Architectural and decorative divisions not to be overlooked.

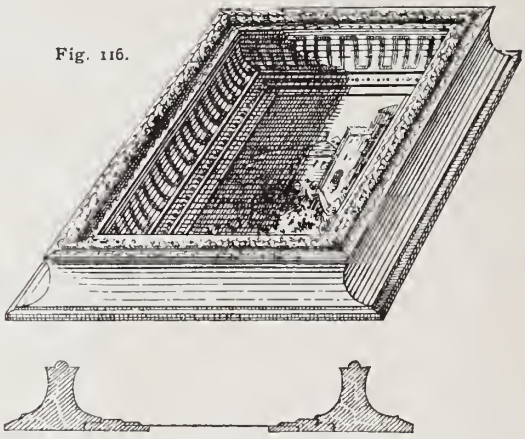


Fig. 116.

These pictures play their part as such, though in a somewhat heavy and sombre fashion, owing to the manner in which they are painted, but they prevent the beauty of the hall from making itself felt, or rather stifle it entirely. We have paintings, but no decoration, properly speaking. In decorating walls with pictures we are too apt at the present time to take



CARVED PICTURE-FRAME. GERMAN.

(1516.)

no account of their frames. In saying this we do not mean that too little importance is attached to the beauty or the magnificence of the frame; on the contrary, it is but too often the best part, sometimes even the only valuable part of the picture. But as regards its shape, artists have led us in a wrong direction. The painter thinks of the frame only as a means of isolating his picture, so as to save it from the possibly hostile influence of surrounding objects, which might lessen its effect. He therefore raises the moulding as high as possible, so as to enclose his picture in a sort of box, at the bottom of which it is seen by the spectator. With the intent of isolating it still further, he causes the frame to be entirely gilded, a proceeding which answers its purpose only too well. Deep frames have, however, one great disadvantage. If the picture is hung on a side wall, where it is certain to have the best light, a deep frame will throw a shadow directly across the canvas, so as to leave one half of it, and sometimes even the whole, in utter darkness. (Fig. 116.) It will readily be seen that in this manner the good result which isolation was intended to produce is entirely precluded. For this reason we prefer the opposite method, by which the picture is raised to the level of the moulding, from which the frame recedes gradually towards the wall. (Fig. 117.) The picture is thus brought out into the light and placed nearer to the eye, while at the same time, in consequence of its form, the frame combines more readily with the wall, so that the ugly and abrupt transition from the one to the other is avoided. Many frames of this kind, and especially those intended for paintings of the smaller

Picture-frames must be taken into account.

How the picture-frame is regarded by the artist.

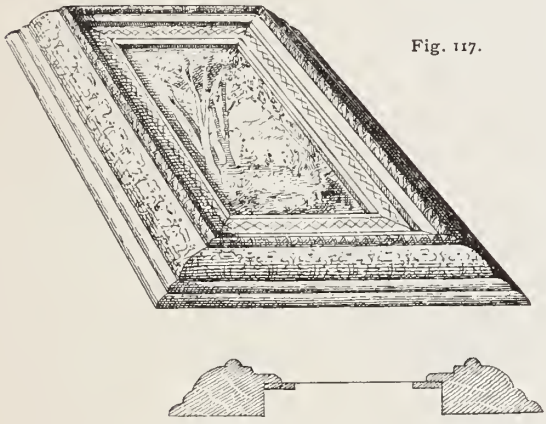


Fig. 117.

Best method of framing a picture.

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Style of old frames commended.

and finer sort, have come down to us from past times. If, however, it should be deemed inexpedient to imitate them too closely, we can at least return to the use of frames of a flatter pattern than those now generally in vogue, and more in accordance with the invariable practice of the ancients. (See Plate XXXVII.)

Gilded frames and their effect.

The question as to whether picture-frames should be gilded is a mooted one. A gilt frame is looked upon, so to speak, as a panacea; it is expected to heighten the effect of any picture, if not indeed to turn a bad into a good one. It is not, however, always advantageous, nor is it always an ornament to the wall. Gilt frames have a lustre which is sometimes quite agreeable, and they are certain to captivate the ordinary eye, as they impart an appearance of richness to the room; but they are very apt to produce a harsh effect, and to destroy its subtler harmonies. On the other hand, how agreeable, how quiet, how high-bred indeed, under certain circumstances, is a well-profiled black or dark brown frame, with perhaps a single gold line next to the picture. Every connoisseur of art knows that such a frame is by no means unfavorable to a picture, and that it is sometimes even decidedly preferable to a gilt frame. Our ancestors, who were well aware of this fact, adopted gilding with much caution. Old German pictures would appear to have been designed for red frames, for in old miniatures representing interiors we frequently see them hanging upon the walls in red frames, enriched with delicate ornaments in gold. It would be worth while to try whether frames of this color might not again be introduced to advantage. Under all circumstances, however, it is desirable to limit the use of gold, and to fundamentally change the principles upon which modern frames are constructed.

Red frames.

How engravings, photographs, etc., can best be made use of.

We have so far spoken exclusively of oil-paintings. It is very natural that the question should now be raised as to the proper treatment of engravings, lithographs, photographs, and the like. We must confess, at the outset, that, according to our way of thinking, all such works of art as these, which can



be reproduced "ad infinitum," belong in portfolios, and not on walls.[3]

Black and white are not decorative colors, properly speaking. But if engravings and the like must be hung up, in accordance with the fashion of the day, let us at least endeavor to treat them in the best possible way. Unlike oil-paintings, objects of this kind require a light or medium light, rather than a dark wall, and blue, for instance, which will never harmonize with oil-paintings, is not only admissible, but even advantageous to them. The harsh effect of the broad white margin is diminished on a light wall. If there is a choice of engravings to be framed, those which have power and depth should be preferred to those which are feeble in tone. Engravings which at least suggest color are always preferable to those executed merely in outline or in imitation of drawings. The latter are meritorious only as drawings, but decoratively they are without any effect whatever. They simply appear like spots on the wall. If we insist on placing them there, we must not look upon them as decoration, — for that they can never be, — but must content ourselves with enjoying them as isolated works of art, calculated to give pleasure through the beauty of their drawing. Frames for engravings are very properly made in a much simpler fashion than those for oil-paintings, for the reason that broad gilt frames would only make their disadvantages as decorative material more conspicuous

Which engravings are best suited for decorative purposes.

[3] Mr. James L. Claghorn, of Philadelphia, President of the Academy of Fine Arts, who possesses one of the finest and largest private collections of engravings in the world, has happily solved the problem as to how such works of art can be exhibited in historical sequence without risk of injury. As arranged in a single room of moderate dimensions in his house, the masterpieces of engraving can be examined with less trouble than the contents of a single portfolio. At either end of the room (see Plate XXXVIII.) stands a showcase 16 feet long, 2½ feet deep, and 13 feet high. Each case is divided into two parts, of which the lower, closed by glass doors and divided into spaces, serves to hold large folios. The upper part of the cases contains the engravings, fastened in chronological order upon slides placed one behind the other, 12 deep from front to back of case, and moved by concealed cords, weights, and pulleys, exactly like a window-sash, from the bottom to the top. When pushed upwards, they fill the upper part of the case, and as each is raised, it leaves the slide behind it visible.

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while dark frames do at least mitigate their shortcomings. Water-color drawings are better than engravings, and all the more so if they are deep and strong in color; but even with them the white margin, which the artist is loath to sacrifice, is a source of disturbance to the wall.

Tapestries and their proper use.

Passing now to tapestries, we find ourselves occupied with a method of decoration which is artistically of much greater importance. Tapestries are stuffs woven with representations of figure subjects which originally were intended solely for the decoration of walls. In modern tapestries, however, such as are made at the French national manufactories at Paris and Beauvais, — almost the only establishments of the kind still in existence, — this end is entirely lost sight of in the attempt to imitate oil-paintings. The closer tapestries are made to attain this ideal, the less do they fulfil their proper object; they become independent works of art, and no longer contribute to the general harmony of the room. The old tapestries woven in Flanders never lost sight of their decorative purpose, and hence we find the most of them surrounded by richly ornamented borders (see Plate XXXIX.) instead of being framed like those of modern manufacture; they were milder in color from the very first, as we may see by the cartoons from which they were woven, and time has still further softened and toned them down. The same is true of the older French Gobelins of the seventeenth and more especially of the eighteenth century, the period of Watteau and Boucher. (See Plate XL.) These Gobelins produce very nearly the effect of decorative wall-paintings, at least in their low and therefore mild harmonies of color, if not in drawing and perspective. Many of the tapestries of the sixteenth century, such as those, for instance, at the Vatican in Rome, have indeed preserved all their original strength of color. With their large figures and dramatic scenes, they are not suitable for living-rooms, as they are calculated to disturb their repose, and even make them extremely dismal. But for such rooms they were never intended, as the purpose for which they were made was to serve for the exceptional decoration of large halls on special

False effect aimed at in modern tapestries.

Old tapestries always made with a decorative purpose.



WOVEN TAPESTRY

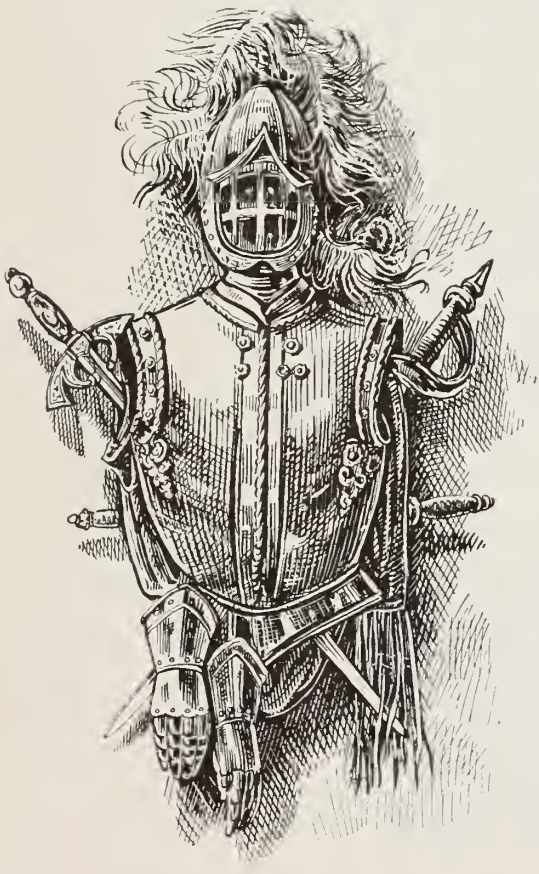
(Supposed to be from a Design by Hans Memling.)

festive occasions. Apart from such use, most of the older tapestries, especially those which have been toned down by time, may very well be used, even to-day, in the same manner as of yore, by either fastening them to the walls in proper places, or using them as curtains in doorways. Their value, and the effect which they produce in such cases, is that of antiquities of a very picturesque kind.

Old tapestries can still be used as in former times.

Generally speaking, antiquities of all sorts are admirably well fitted to be used for decorative purposes. Time has given them a patina, which avails to reconcile even heterogeneous objects, and to make those differing in style combine more readily. Considering their great variety in material, color, form, and purpose, such antiquities stand in need of a quiet background, and if the wall on which they are to be placed is gaudy in color, or, still worse, is covered with a design in gold, the result will be a complete want of repose and dire confusion. Overcrowding and disorder must also be avoided, as otherwise the most beautiful works in the world cannot save a room from looking like a bric-à-brac shop. Above all things special attention must be paid to the arrangement of objects

Fig. 118.

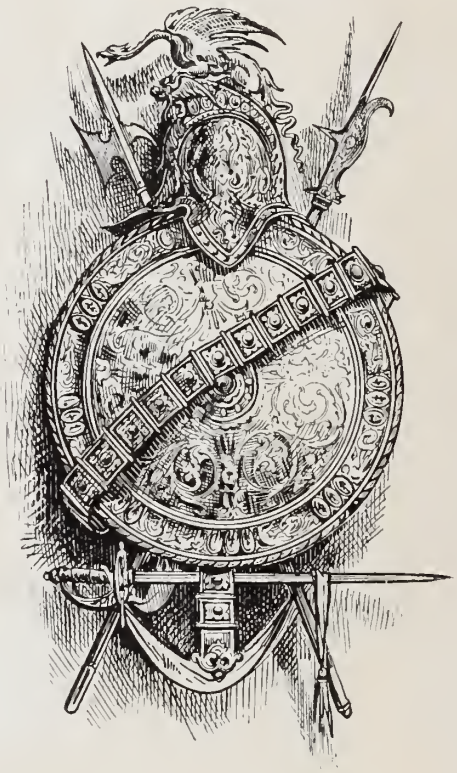


Proper background for objects of "virtú," and their fitting arrangement.

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of "virtú." The most important should be placed in the best light and in the most prominent positions with those of lesser importance grouped around them; symmetry should be observed in the relative position of the groups; and those of minor importance kept subordinate to the main group, so that all the scattered parts when taken together may present the appearance of a unit. That which is alike in color and form should either be massed together or placed in opposition; weapons may be arranged in trophies (Figs. 118 and 119) or otherwise, but always simply and without affectation, and gaps, which produce the effect of holes, must be avoided. One of the first conditions to be observed is, that the antiquities shall not be insignificant, or valueless frippery, but that they shall at least answer some decorative purpose, even if they cannot lay claim to great artistic value. Rooms thus decorated may be made to produce a picturesque, highly pleasing, and indeed charming effect, impressing us with the idea of perfection, because their decoration results from a combination of the fairest flowers of true art.

Fig. 119.



Desirable character of objects used in decoration.

The ceiling and its proper treatment.

There is still another part of the room, and indeed a most important part, that must not be overlooked, if it is to be made perfectly harmonious, namely, the *ceiling*, which in Northern dwelling-houses of the average class is nowadays generally altogether neglected, and as a rule simply white-



WOVEN TAPESTRY.

(From a Design by François Boucher.)

washed, even when the walls are brilliantly tinted. In the South it also receives but a modicum of ornamentation, by far the larger part of its surface being left white and plain. A few mouldings and ornaments painted in imitation of stucco, a centre-piece of the same character in the middle of the ceiling, with a little gilding here and there, is very frequently held to be a sufficient covering for all the magnificence which we lavish on walls, floor, and furniture. And yet there are plenty of reasons which point to the ceiling as the place of all places best fitted for decoration: it is spread out above us in undisturbed quiet; it is never trodden upon; it is never hidden by furniture, or interfered with by the ornaments ordinarily placed on the wall. It is true that the darkness of our dwellings may frequently be pleaded as a valid excuse for leaving the ceiling undecorated, and it is to be remembered that, as its weight is suspended over our heads, it ought not to produce the impression of heaviness, but rather that of lightness and stability. This need not, however, hinder us from covering it with rich decoration, provided always that in this decoration the rules prescribed by the nature of the ceiling and the harmonious arrangement of the room are observed.

Why the ceiling is an especially fit place for decoration.

If we take account of that which is peculiar to the ceiling, we shall find that it is the counterpart of the floor, inasmuch as it is likewise a limited surface, with this difference, however, that it need not necessarily be level and unobstructed throughout its whole extent, since it is not destined to be trodden upon, or used for the support of furniture or other objects. On the contrary, the origin of the ceiling would rather point to a surface with regularly disposed elevations and depressions. In the first place, it is composed of a row of beams, which, whether they be of wood, stone, or as nowadays of iron, support a covering of wood or stone above, and bear up one of a similar nature below. The lower covering, in our ordinary modern dwellings, generally appears to be a flat surface, and is usually finished off in plaster. In the more advanced development of architecture the vaulted roof, con-

Points of resemblance between the floor and the ceiling.

Nature of the ceiling.

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stituting a third form, was added, which cannot be altogether passed over in discussing the questions now under consideration, although it is of but little importance in connection with our modern dwellings.

Practical view of the subject.

Let us begin then by considering the ceiling, not from an art-historical, but from a practical point of view, as formed of beams running parallel to each other at certain distances, and of boards or tiles lying on these beams, or, in other words, as consisting of the floor of the upper story. In this case, when looked at from below, it will appear as an alternating series of elevations and depressions. (See Plate IX. A.) This most primitive and simplest kind of ceiling has frequently been adopted, especially in the Middle Ages, when it was made the basis of rich ornamentation, as the beams were often carved throughout their whole length and laid upon richly sculptured supports. In modern Gothic castles ceilings constructed on this principle have frequently been imitated, and no objections can indeed be raised against the principle itself, as it is simple and natural, though it cannot be denied that they produce a somewhat heavy effect, especially if constructed of dark wood; but this is compensated by the feeling of security inspired by the beams, which are left visible to the eye. Such a ceiling, or one that is constructed on a similar system, can hardly be dispensed with in a panelled room, as in spite of its dark color it helps to complete the impression of comfort, combined with solidity and gravity, which rooms of this kind generally produce.

Visible beams give a feeling of security.

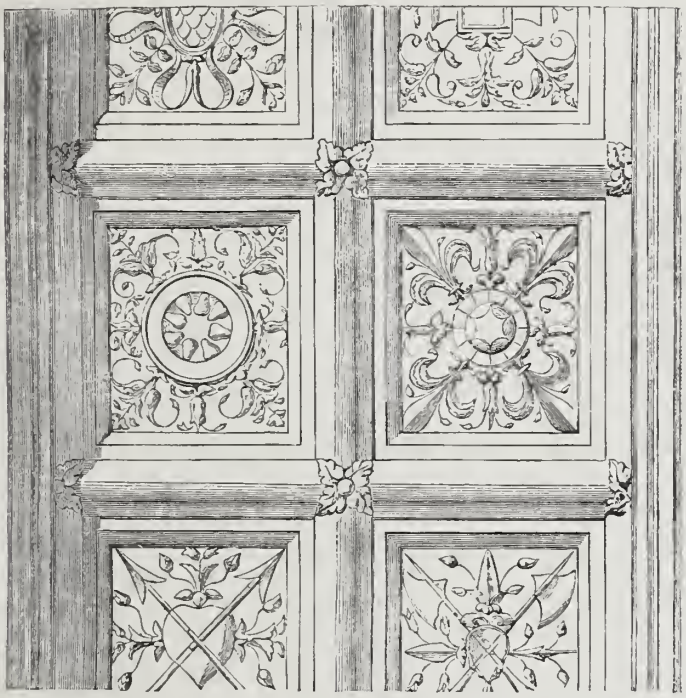
Cross-beams forming sunken panels.

From the use of parallel beams upon the ceiling, we next come to that of cross-beams, forming square sunken panels, or coffers, well adapted to receive colored ornaments, or ornaments in relief, such as rosettes, stars, and the like. (Fig. 120; see also Plate XXII.) This system forms the basis of the Greek coffered ceiling, which was very frequently employed and most splendidly treated by the ancients. But the Renaissance has shown that it is capable of a still richer and more varied development, by its artistic and rhythmic system of arrangement into panels varying in size and in shape. (See

The coffered ceiling, ancient and modern.

Fig. 70, p. 101.) These panels, together with the beams, were either left entirely free from colored decoration (in which case the beams were simply chamfered and the points

Fig. 120.



of intersection marked by rosettes or knots), or were pictorially decorated in the most varied kind.

Varieties of vaulting.

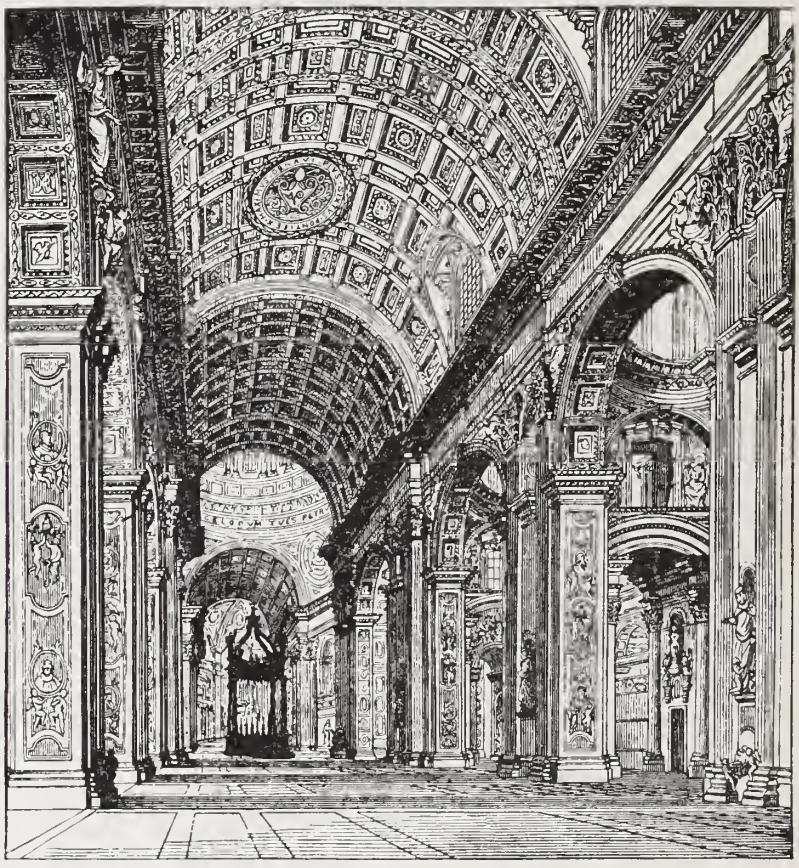
If to these flat ceilings we add the various systems of vaulting, the barrel-vault (Fig. 121), the cupola (Fig. 122), the cross-arched vault (Fig. 123), and more especially the coved ceiling (see Plate XLI., p. 232), which has a flat space in its centre, it will at once be seen that this part of the room offers a very excellent architectural basis for the display of the highest class of decorative art. The arts of every mediæval, and especially those of every modern, period have rivalled each other in making the ceiling a field for the display of the richest decoration, and the greatest artists have with especial predilection devoted their best powers to the solution of the prob-

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Figure-painting and its drawbacks.

lems there presented. Considering this fact, it would hardly seem admissible to follow those who absolutely condemn all figure-painting on the ceiling, on account of its apparent contradiction of the simplest rules of logic, and of the evident drawbacks which are attached to it. We must place ourselves at the artist's stand-point, and endeavor to find out what can

Fig. 121.

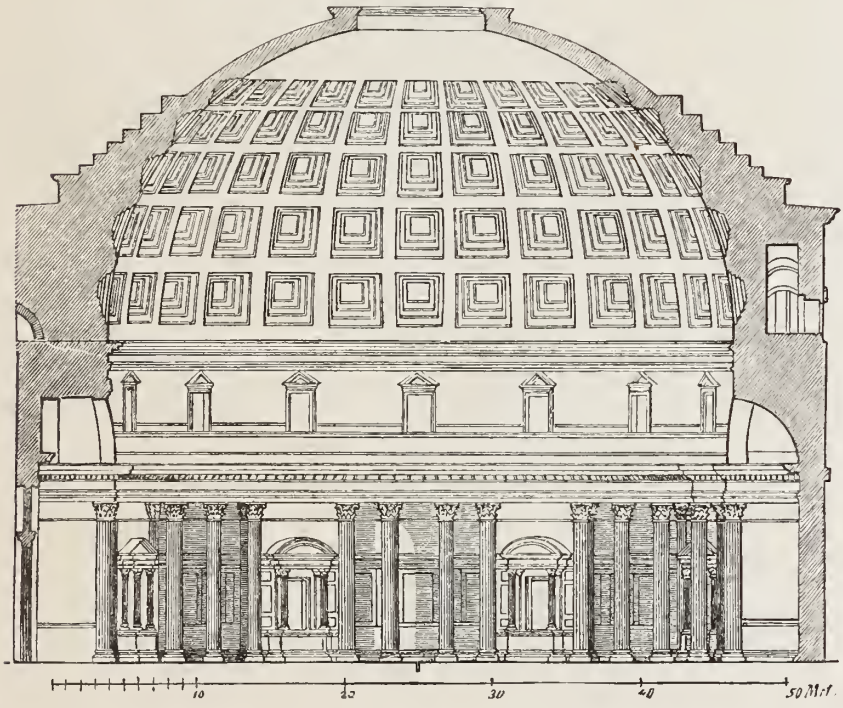


be tolerated, or how the incongruities which confront us can be reconciled.

It certainly cannot be gainsaid, that figure-painting on ceilings, or let us say historical painting, which is the highest development of the art, entails much discomfort and trouble on the observer. To be able to look at the paintings he is

compelled to throw back the head, so as bring his face into a horizontal position, parallel to the picture-plane; he is obliged not only to remain in this uncomfortable attitude, but also to go round the room in order to find the correct position for each picture, and when he has found it, he sees everything else in a false and distorted perspective. All this would be of little consequence, if the paintings had simply been conceived as decoration, and if the end aimed at had been noth-

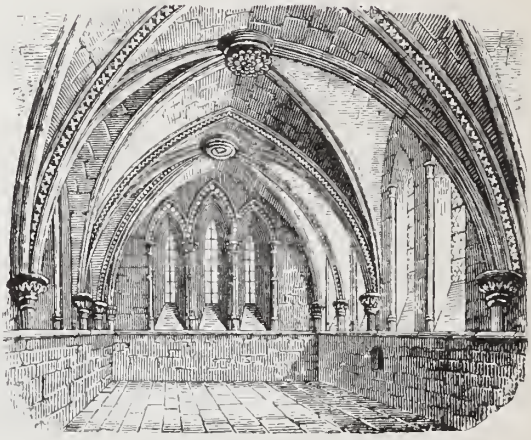
Fig. 122.



ing but a pleasing effect of color, as would indeed be the case if correct principles had been strictly adhered to. This, however, is not so. The best artists have indeed endeavored to combine the two, — decorative effect and separate paintings, — but they all ask us to look at the various parts separately, and this is precisely where the evil shows itself. We may be amply repaid for our trouble by looking at the works of a Michelangelo or a Raphael; but with other artists the physi-

cal as well as the æsthetic pain produced is very apt to absorb our attention, and to lead us to inquire how far such a method of painting is justifiable. When our attention has once been aroused, we feel bound at least to demand that the arrangement adopted shall be the most favorable under the circumstances, both for the observer and for the paintings which he is to observe. Here, as well as elsewhere, however, there are limits to the admissible, even if we accept the artist's point of view.

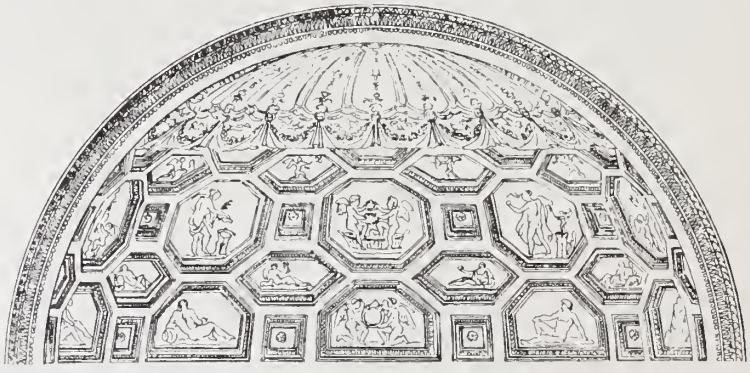
Fig. 123.



Position of figures easily decided in vaulted ceilings.

In the case of a vaulted ceiling it is generally an easy matter to decide the question as to the position of the figures. In a cupola it is self-indicated, although the division into panels leaves some room for the display of artistic ingenuity. (Fig. 124.) This is true also of the cross-arched vault, as of all

Fig. 124.



other forms which rise from four principal sides towards a keystone. In a barrel-vault the position of the paintings or

of the figures is likewise unmistakably indicated: they can neither be placed obliquely nor lengthwise; each figure must either rest upon, or at least point with its feet toward, the cornice from which the arch springs. The real difficulty only commences when we come to the coved ceiling, part of which is plane, or the flat ceiling, which is plane throughout its entire surface, so that the disposition of one or more paintings rests entirely with the artist. The circumstances which he must consider and should be guided by are those of light and the position of the observer.

Difficulty of dealing with figures on the coved ceiling.

Let us suppose, for the present, that the artist has decided to decorate his ceiling with a single picture. We consider this as undoubtedly the worst possible solution of the problem, for it leaves us to deal with a *painting proper*, but not with *decoration as such*, which latter should in truth be the only end aimed at. Let us, however, ignore this objection. The solution is possible, and has frequently been attempted. In such cases it is a matter of indifference whether the painting takes up the whole of the ceiling, or whether a part of the latter remains to be covered by ornament of some kind or other. We are simply dealing with an easel-picture, perhaps even with an oil-painting (as in the halls of the Liechtenstein Gallery), which, instead of being placed on the wall, has been transferred to the ceiling. The question now is, What position must the figures occupy? Shall their heads point towards the windows or towards the opposite wall, or shall the decision rest solely upon considerations growing out of the position of the observer?

Decoration and not the exhibition of a single picture to be aimed at.

How figures are to be directed when painted on a ceiling.

There can be no room for doubt, whenever the position of the observer is fixed, as in a concert hall, where the audience remains quietly seated, facing toward the orchestra. In such a hall the position of the painting is decided by the position of the observer, who when he throws back his head should see the picture upright before him. This is true also of churches. In the principal nave at least, and provided the ceiling is flat, the paintings must be directed towards those who pass from the door to the altar. But the question assumes an entirely

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The question depends upon whether the observer has or has not a fixed place in a hall.

different aspect whenever the observer has no fixed place in the hall and no determined point towards which to direct his steps. In such case the decision should be mainly influenced by the light, and it will be found most advantageous to place the picture so that it shall appear upright to the observer when he stands with his back towards the windows. The figures must of course look towards the windows, and have their feet directed towards the opposite wall.

In the first as well as in the second of the two cases so far considered, the evil is, however, only mitigated, but not done away with. As soon as we leave the one favorable position we shall be blinded by the light, or the painting will appear distorted and out of drawing, and under no circumstances can we ever receive the delightful impression produced by true decoration. To be able to enjoy the work of the artist we must isolate it completely from all that surrounds it.

Isolation necessary if the artist's work is to be enjoyed.

The same conditions hold good for the coved ceiling, that is to say, for its flat part, whenever this is to be occupied by a single painting, as was frequently the case during the Renaissance period. The great masters, to whom we owe some of the most beautiful ceilings of this kind, always placed the picture so that it appears upright to the observer when he turns his back to the window. This is the case with Guido Reni's celebrated "Aurora" in the Palazzo Rospigliosi at Rome, as well as with the principal picture in Raphael's series of frescos from the life of Psyche at the Farnesina. (Plate XLI.) In the latter instance, especially, the incongruities are reduced very nearly to a minimum, as the rest of the decoration is so important that it is hardly possible for any of the parts to belittle the effect of the whole. Still, even here the separate parts fix the spectator's attention, and prevent him from duly appreciating that combined and admirable effect of the whole, which is the distinguishing characteristic of this ceiling.

How the old masters located pictures in ceilings.

On the whole, the coved ceiling offers a great advantage, decoratively considered, inasmuch as it presents a variety of positions, panels, and planes, which in a certain manner force

The coved ceiling most suitable for decoration.



the artist to respect the laws of decoration. Even if he has made one painting more important than the rest, these latter must also be considered, and he is therefore compelled to bring a series of pictures and ornaments into harmony with each other, whose combined effect must necessarily be decorative. The case is different when the artist has to deal with a flat or nearly flat ceiling, whether it approaches the barrel-vault in shape, or subsides into an arch where its coves meet the cornice of the wall. Artists have always been quite sensible of the incongruities, in perspective as well as in decoration, to which ceilings of this kind are liable to give rise, and they have tried to avoid them, either by dividing the whole surface into a great many pictures, or else by introducing only one picture, treated in a manner which made it appear as if the event represented were actually taking place in an open space above the heads of the lookers-on.

Methods adopted with a view of meeting the difficulties met with in treating flat ceilings decoratively.

Let us proceed to consider the first method, the underlying principle of which pretty nearly coincides with that of the ceiling constructed of a network of artistically arranged beams. It is by all means the more correct of the two. It was evidently the artist's intention to treat the pictures so that they should have no special direction, and thus to avoid all the distortions growing out of changes in the observer's position. Of the many pictures in a variety of positions, the observer will see at least the one or the other correctly, no matter where he may place himself; while of the others, considering that they are all equivalent, he will receive only a general impression of color, which impression will be still further heightened by the borders, bands, and enframing ornaments, and more especially by the rich display of gilding. The principle, we have said, is a correct one, considering the circumstances, but it must also be correctly applied.

The first method the most correct.

It is clear, at first sight, that, although the pictures are not to have any specific direction, they cannot be placed arbitrarily, but that, as they are to form a group, they must converge to a common point, and that this point must be the centre of the whole surface. The figures, as well as the pic-

Pictures cannot be arbitrarily placed.

tures, should therefore either radiate from the centre, or from four directions corresponding to the four sides of the room (see Fig. 68, p. 98), unless indeed they should happen to form part of a richly developed border. This latter possibility, however, does not concern us here, as at present we have the entire decoration of the ceiling under consideration. If the centre is to be occupied by a picture which will dominate all the rest, its position should be regulated by the rules laid down above, that is to say, it must depend upon the light, or the fixed situation of the audience in relation to it. The farther the disposition and the arrangement of the paintings deviates from this principle, the greater will be the liability of falling into errors and absurdities. As an instance, we may cite a very late example. I allude to the ceiling in the great hall of the new building of the Musical Association at Vienna. The principle followed in the arrangement of this ceiling is the one which we are just now discussing. The gilding and its combination with color is managed quite correctly, and the effect obtained is eminently decorative; the component pictures are well drawn, though lifelessly composed; they also enter excellently well into the general harmony of color, but their position is absolutely incomprehensible. There are three rows of paintings representing angels floating in the air; the angels in one of these rows have their heads turned towards the left, while those in the other two, including the main row, have their heads turned to the right, so that their feet point in the direction of the windows. If the attempt to avoid a definite direction by means of a more artistic arrangement was purposely left untried, or if it was rendered impossible by the iron cross-beams, the heads of the figures should at least have been turned towards the principal part of the audience in the parterre, so that they would have been seen by it in an upright position. Their proper direction was clearly indicated, but as they are now placed, like easel-pictures in a reversed position, the angels do not float, but swim before the audience, and, so to speak, turn their backs to it. Only those who occupy the boxes can see a few of the figures in an

Considerations which regulate the position of a picture.

Ceiling of the Musical Association Hall at Vienna discussed.

Mistakes committed.



upright position, and these figures are the very ones which are farthest away, while those that are near stand on their heads. The mistake is so evident that even the otherwise exquisite effect of the ceiling does not avail to divert the attention from it.

Second method of avoiding existing difficulties.

The second method by which an escape from the difficulties which we have described has been sought, is the use of an exceedingly artificial perspective, by means of which the ceiling is apparently done away with entirely. The origin of this invention, in the Baroque period of art, is in itself sufficient to arouse certain misgivings in us. Its leading idea is, to treat the apartment as an open hall, whose ceiling is replaced by clouds or the clear sky, or by a painted architectural structure resting on the cornice, upon or in which the scene represented actually takes place. (See Plate XLII.) Michelangelo already had something of this sort in his mind when he painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel; for the painted architecture seems to be a continuation of the cornice, and the single figures impress us as if they were alive. But still the effect is that of a ceiling, and not of an unlimited expanse of space. It is the latter especially which was ever present as an ideal to the perspective painters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. With their brush they reared on the far-projecting cornices of the four surrounding walls a whole world of temples and artfully contrived buildings, which appeared to rise to their natural height before the wondering eye. They even brought these buildings down to the wall itself, and painted flights of steps leading up to them, on which men and women went up and down, as if they were coming towards, or were going away from, the spectator, who was cheated into the belief that he could mount the steps and enter into the temples. Above them opened the wide heavens, tenanted by all the inhabitants of Olympus, sitting, floating, or walking on the clouds, or by the hierarchy of the Christian heavens, where God the Father, Christ, the Virgin Mary, with the innumerable hosts of the blessed, were visible in the inaccessible, infinite distance. The ceilings of palaces, as well as

The apartment treated as a hall open to the sky.

False use of painted architecture.

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of churches, were decorated in this manner, and among the latter especially those of the Jesuits, who counted among their number Father Andrea Pozzo, a very daring artist, by whom this species of painting was carried to its utmost limits, and reduced to a system. The wonderful skill displayed in one of his most brilliant works, which may be seen in the great hall of the Liechtenstein Gallery at Vienna, compels our admiration, but at the same time our eyes convince us that in method it is utterly false.

The Jesuit fresco-painter, Father Andrea Pozzo, and his daring innovations.

Condemnation of the system.

It seems almost superfluous to repeat that the imitation of reality which is aimed at in such paintings is not permissible on general principles, as the method sufficiently condemns itself in a variety of other ways. First of all, it unavoidably forces the artist to commit sins against beauty in his drawing. A figure which is supposed to float or stand directly above our heads ought really to show us the soles of its feet only, that is to say, be so foreshortened that the circumference of the body will appear in outline, and the head be altogether invisible. As a matter of course, the artist endeavors to shirk this issue, and succeeds in doing so. Nevertheless, he cannot avoid foreshortenings in which the abdomen and the chin will be cut by the lines of the knee, and the forehead by those of the nose, whose open nostrils are seen by the observer from below. Thus the artist will always more or less approach or avoid that ideal of ugliness, absolute foreshortening, and, worst of all, must plan his whole composition so as to suit an observer placed at a fixed point of view. Whenever he happens to be in this one position, he will find everything above him in the most perfect order, and may indeed query in his astonishment where reality ends and illusion begins. But so soon as he changes his place, everything becomes chaotic: the figures appear distressingly ill drawn, all the lines begin to dance, and the architectural parts, inclining more and more, threaten to bury him under their ruins. Any one who has not by good fortune placed himself exactly in the right spot will find that he is in this intolerable position, and from the nature of the case it follows that not more than one person can occupy it at any one given moment of time.

Foreshortenings of an unbecoming nature.

A good effect only received by the observer from one point of view.

Some artists of the same period tried to unite both methods by treating part of the ceiling ornamentally, and by filling the centre space with a large framed picture, in which, following the lead of the painters in perspective, they aimed at a perfect semblance of reality. In most instances they selected mythological scenes for their subjects, with figures floating on clouds, and in their treatment of these subjects fairly outdid their masters. Calling plastic art to their aid, they formed clouds and limbs of stucco painted in natural colors, wherever these came near the frame, and even allowed them to run over it, or to hang down into the room below, thus breaking down those boundaries between art and reality, which are so obviously and rationally marked by the frame. Such licenses bring too much of the spirit-world within our four walls; they not only impress us unpleasantly from an æsthetic point of view, but even threaten our physical welfare by the massive limbs of the ideal beings above us, which in spirits is hardly becoming.

Attempt to combine the two methods of treatment.

Combination of the pictorial and the plastic.

In such cases sculpture has evidently been called in simply for the purpose of heightening the illusive semblance of reality. But the matter assumes an entirely different phase when sculpture is made to play only a decorative part. In such case it is admissible within certain limits, even on the ceiling, and its use as something more than a mere architectural framework in relief becomes justifiable. With certain styles in their more elaborate development, as in those of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the use of sculpture is indeed almost imperatively demanded; but in its application the limits of propriety have been overstepped. When we see life-size, or even more than life-size figures standing on cornices which project far out from the wall, and employed to support or to hold panels with paintings in them, we can let them pass, but when they extend their limbs beyond the cornice and into the room, they disturb our peace, because they threaten danger. It is worse still when they are so suspended that their arms and legs, or perhaps even half their bodies, dangle from the ceiling. We are perfectly justified in assuming that they must fall some time or other, but very naturally cannot tell before-

Sculptural decoration must be confined within certain limits.

Inadmissible use of sculpture.

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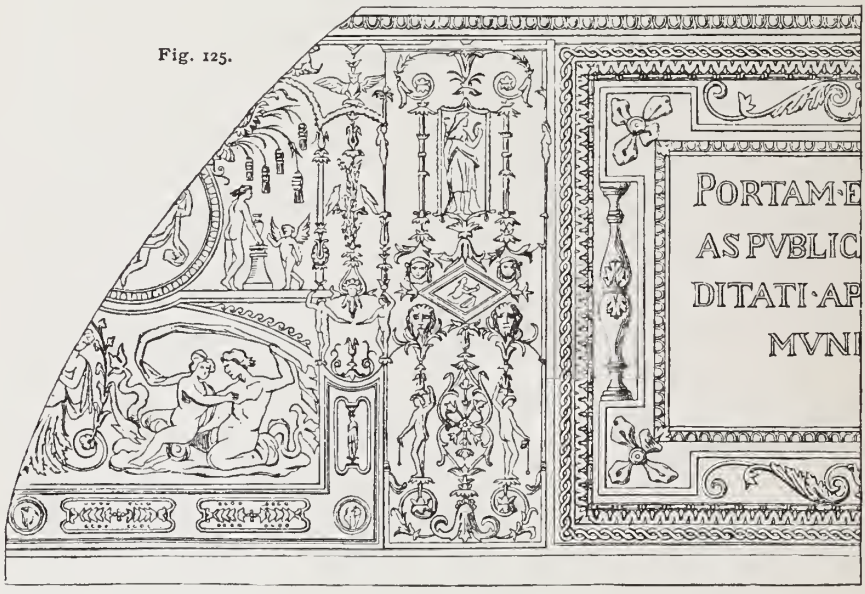
How plastic enrichments should be used.

hand when that dangerous moment will arrive. As this applies also to ornaments, it follows that plastic enrichments on the ceiling must be in tolerably low relief, so that it may seem to the spectator as if the ceiling and its decoration were almost inseparably joined together.

It is well known that a high degree of beauty can be attained in sculpture, even in the flattest relief, but on the ceiling of a room or a hall this would in most cases be wanting in effect. It therefore becomes necessary, when it is used, to emphasize the relief either by gold or by color; not, however, according

Flat relief colored and gilded.

Fig. 125.



to the modern fashion, by painting dark shadows alongside of it, but rather by coloring either the ornament or the ground, or both together. As an example of the exquisite beauty which may be reached by decorations of this kind, we may cite Raphael's arabesques in the Loggie, in which ornaments painted and in stucco are combined (Figs. 125 and 126); or Giulio Romano's ornaments in stucco on the arched ceiling of the great hall of the Villa Madama, near Rome, which are incomparably charming, but are unfortunately going to decay, together with the villa itself, that realization of a magical palace in a fairy tale.

The stucco ornaments of the Villa Madama.

Such a decoration might also be employed with perfect propriety in our own modern dwellings, although the decorations thus far described and criticised have been rather those of apartments of state or of halls destined for public use, than of living-rooms proper. In these latter we generally have to deal with ceilings forming a flat, unbroken plane, finished off in stucco, and destined to be painted. A ceiling of this kind is open to objections for various reasons, but as we cannot do away with it under present circumstances, we must endeavor to bring it within the pale of artistic harmony, and not fall

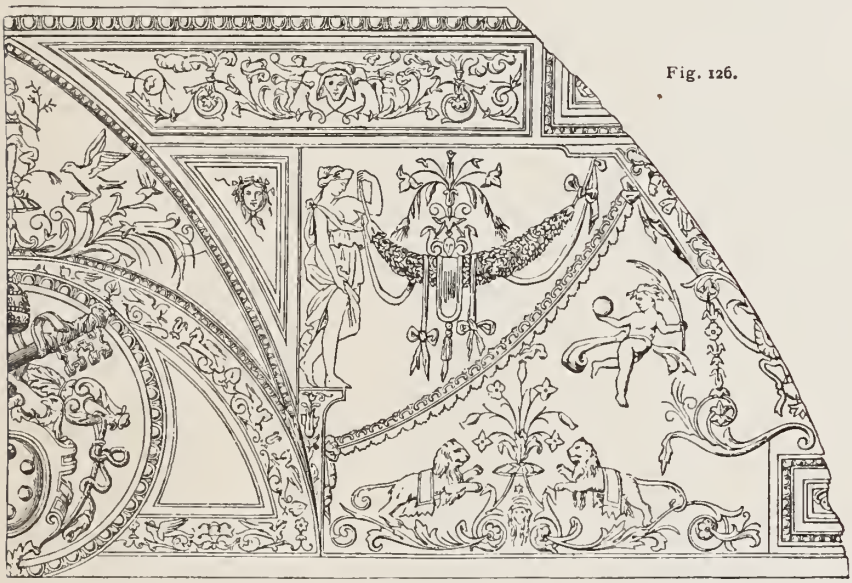


Fig. 126.

into the common error of thinking that it is unworthy of a rich ornamentation because it is set above our heads.

Want of solidity is a sufficient reason for not making use of any great amount of plastic decoration upon a ceiling, and this necessarily leads us to its polychromatic treatment, which should include all ornaments in relief belonging to it, such, for instance, as the rosette in the centre. The principal object to be aimed at in polychromatic treatment is the general impression to be produced by the ceiling as a whole, and not the beauty of its component parts. Our own century has wasted

Polychromatic treatment.

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a vast deal of good flower-painting on ceilings, where it appears framed in gray lines, as if executed for its own sake, having an isolated effect or no effect at all. Many of us still cling to such errors. He only is wise in art, who knows his means as well as his ends, and does nothing but that which will produce a desired and well-considered effect when put in its proper place. As we have no fixed place in a room, and desire to feel at ease everywhere, it is necessary, among other things, that we should not be disturbed by violations of æsthetic laws. It follows that, wherever we may place ourselves in a room, we ought to receive an almost equally harmonious impression.

Adaptation of means to ends a proof of wisdom.

Whole surface to be covered.

It is furthermore necessary that the decoration, within certain limitations, should cover the whole surface of the ceiling. The present fashion generally emphasizes the border and the centre only, leaving the ground, which in most cases is by far the greater part of the surface, to be covered with a coat of whitewash. White, however, in such large masses is an unfit color for decoration. Whenever we desire, for the sake of light, to impart a character of brightness to the ceiling, we should, in order to attain a true decorative effect, choose some light color, say a light yellowish tint, for the ground, so as to soften the harsh glare of the white, or better yet cover the ground with a delicate, but regularly disposed ornament, such as small stars, or some other unobtrusive pattern. The object of this is to establish a connection between the border and the rosette in the centre, without which the ceiling will be wanting in unity.

The ground to serve as a means of connecting the border and the centre of the ceiling.

Another error to which we feel bound to call attention is frequently committed in the treatment of the point where the ceiling and the wall meet. Very generally there is no connection at all between the border on the ceiling and the wall itself, the white ground of the former being allowed to strike directly against the upper margin of the latter, which produces a harsh and unpleasant effect. As a matter of course the separation of the one from the other must be marked by the color, but the eye is much more pleasantly affected, and

Relation to be established between the border and the wall.

the room is at the same time made to look higher, if the transition be softened by the interposition of a color which keeps a happy medium, as to strength, between the color of the wall and that of the ceiling.

Laws which govern the treatment of the floor and ceiling nearly identical.

On the whole, the flat ceiling, so far as the composition of the ornaments is concerned, is subject to the same laws which govern the treatment of the floor, with only this difference, that they are less stringent for the ceiling. On the other hand, we must be careful to guard against heaviness in color and in drawing, for the ceiling, however rich, should always appear light rather than heavy. The main parts of the decoration are the same for both, namely, the border, and an ornament in the centre, an additional reason for which latter, in the case of the ceiling, is furnished by the chandelier. The ancient world knew nothing of such a fixture, and hence attached but little importance to the centre. The Pompeian ceilings (of which, however, but too few examples are preserved to enable us to judge fully) were divided by broad red lines into panels throughout their whole extent, having the most delicate little ornaments introduced between them, composed of birds, garlands, etc. (See Plate VI. B.) But such ceilings necessarily demand to be associated with that charmingly imaginative, delicate, and graceful mural ornamentation which we find in Pompeii, and which, for extraneous reasons, we can make use of in but very rare cases. It follows that ceilings of this sort are of little avail to us, because they are out of keeping with the heavy, solid ornamentation of modern walls. Their lightness is of too cheerful and airy a kind. For these reasons we shall do well, as a general rule, to adhere to the system of border and ornamented centre.

The chandelier gives an importance to the centre not formerly known.

The border and the ornamented centre are the principal features in the scheme of decoration.

The richness, the treatment as regards color, and the general character of the composition within these limits, are regulated partly by the general laws of surface-decoration, especially by those peculiar to the ceiling, and partly also by the taste of the owner and the destination of the room. The artist may here give tolerably free scope to his imagination. The creations of his fancy will be equally agreeable to us whether he indulge in the graceful play of arabesques, or introduce luxuri-

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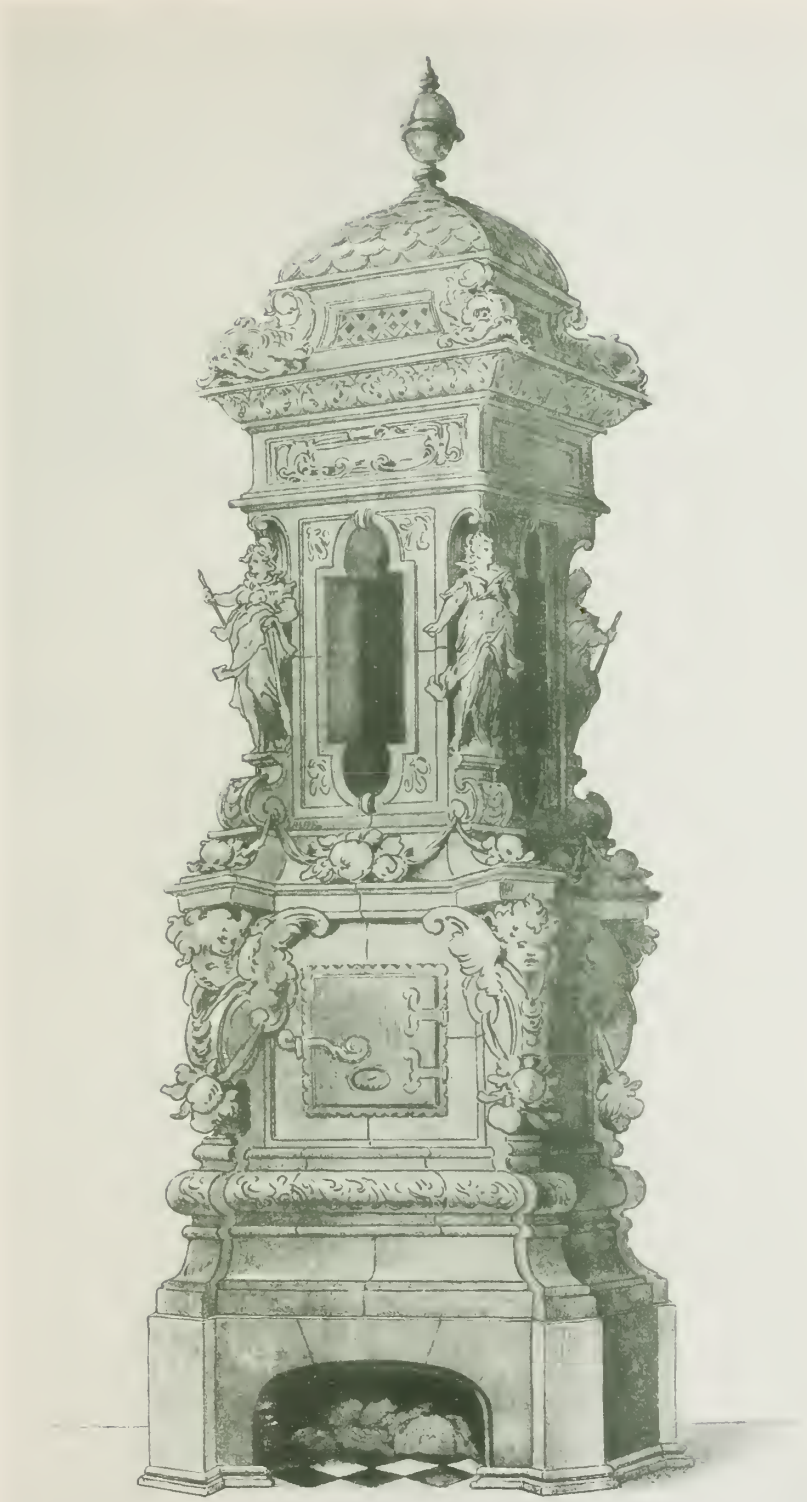
ant flowers in glowing colors, disposed after the manner of Indian borders; nor shall we chide him if he should scatter little figures of children, genii, amorettes, elfins, birds, or other animals through the leaves and tendrils of his scroll-work. We are even disposed to accept little pictures in graceful frames between the arabesques, provided that they really belong to the whole, and are so subordinate to the general harmony as not to obtrude themselves upon the eye. This harmony must never be lost sight of. We may indeed discuss the floor, the ceiling, and the wall separately, but we can never shape them or combine them without considering their relative effect with regard to that harmony which will weld them into an agreeable unit.

Relative effect of the floor, the ceiling, and the wall always to be considered.

Harmony again compels us to turn our attention also to the other fixed accessories of the room, such as stoves, doors, window-frames, all of which are but too often lost sight of by those of us who attempt to arrange our houses artistically, for which neglect they frequently punish us by marring whatever else of good we may have accomplished. White painted doors have come down to us from the last period of the Rococo, as we have shown above, and their use is in a manner justified by the colorless, faded character of our walls, if we momentarily ignore the fact that they utterly disregard the character of the wood. Now, however, that we have again begun to make use of stronger colors in our wall-papers and other mural decorations, they are entirely out of place, as they give rise to harsh contrasts, and are destructive of all harmony of color. Nevertheless, people will not part with them; they are still considered elegant by persons of ordinary taste, and it would almost seem as if their popularity were really due to these very contrasts by which the modern "salon" is generally characterized. In a wall tinted brown or red, or any other strong color, these white doors look like holes. The way by which harmony can be restored in such cases, and doors and walls brought into unison, is very simple indeed. All that is needed is to respect material, that is to say, to leave the wood of its natural color and its peculiar pattern. In dealing with such wood-work, it is not difficult to avoid mistakes,

White doors and their ill effect.

Wood to be left of its natural color.



for its brown tone agrees well with almost any decoration based on color. It will simply be necessary to choose a lighter or a darker tone, according to circumstances, taking care that the doors, which are either constructed of variously colored woods, or painted in a variety of colors, do not contrast too violently with the shade selected.

Stoves.

Precisely the same remarks apply to stoves. All our stoves are ugly in form, and as a rule we fare badly when we are compelled to purchase one at a warehouse. For their improvement it would be advisable to return to older forms, as has been already occasionally done.

Objectionable features.

The most objectionable thing about the German stoves is their color, which is almost always white or gray; and this, as we know, is sufficient to destroy that effect of harmony which we wish to attain. The brown colors which are sometimes met with are generally of bad shades, and the green stoves, of which there are some, though not many, good examples (Plate XLIII.), can seldom be used, as green harmonizes least of all with other colors. Our modern polychromatic stoves and those decorated with flowers are unbearable. We are better off in respect to open fireplaces, as their forms are influenced more by sculptors and architects than by tradespeople, but this is less important, as they are rather objects of luxury than of necessity in our (German) houses. Beauty alone is not to decide the question; for the most perfect æsthetic shape which can be found for such objects as minister to our daily wants is also the best practical form.

Open fireplaces.

Window-frames.

What has been said of the doors is applicable also to the window-frames. They should be treated in precisely the same way, that is to say, the wood should retain its natural color. If we were desired to carry out our principle to the utmost, we should be obliged to color the windows also. To do this, we should have to return to the ancient art of glass painting, and endeavor to revive it in a suitable form. This would fill the last void in the decoration of the room, and its artistic adornment, so far as it consists of fixed parts, would be complete. To the impression of isolation and perfect seclusion

Use of colored glass recommended.

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produced by such a room, the play of the colored light would add quite a peculiarly poetical charm of its own.

It seems almost useless, however, to talk of this. The demand for the greatest attainable amount of light in our dwellings, the technical progress in the manufacture of glass, the delight which an unobstructed and extended view affords, all militate powerfully against the reintroduction of glass-painting in our modern dwellings. Nevertheless, we shall say a few words in favor of its moderate use. The gorgeous painted windows of mediæval Germany are of course out of the question; but there is another very suitable style, commonly adopted in Italy in the fifteenth century, of which many examples still remain, — as, for instance, in the Certosa of Pavia, — namely, the placing of a slightly ornamented border in light-colored glass around the window, with a coat-of-arms or some other ornament in the centre, leaving the remaining space to be filled with clear, white, unornamented glass. This method, of which successful examples may be seen in the windows on the staircase of the Austrian Museum, might be employed with good results to effect a transition from the dark wall to the opening for light, and thus fill up the last yawning, glaring gap in the general harmony of color.

Light-colored glass borders.



CHAPTER VIII.

FURNITURE.



OT very long ago, it was held to be a sign of the most exquisite taste to use one and the same material for walls, furniture, door and window-curtains, and even for bed-hangings, and this opinion is not altogether obsolete. The material preferred was a glossy, flowered chintz. To make a house thus decorated perfectly harmonious, but one thing is needful, namely, that all the ladies of the family should clothe themselves in the same shiny material, as they in point of fact now do, when they wear summer dresses with flowery chintz patterns in the Rococo style. Then they appear to have nothing about them, æsthetically speaking, calculated to disturb domestic peace. One thing only has been overlooked; — the result reached is uniformity, not unity; tediousness, but not art. Harmony consists in the tasteful intermingling of things different and various, and it is the province of art to unite these elements into one agreeable whole.

Uniformity of material a sign of good taste.

What harmony consists of.

As a matter of course the furniture should harmonize with the walls; but as it is different in its nature and its forms, it should be clearly separate, and stand out from them. Floor, walls, and ceiling are the fixed and immovable parts of the room, while the furniture, as its French name "meubles" implies, is movable, and can be carried about. In consequence of this it has an æsthetic code and artistic principles of its own.

Fixtures and movables in a room.

CHAP. VIII.

In discussing our subject we have thus far ignored any fixed historic style, in the belief that so long as we pay due attention to the natural conditions of the problems with which we have to deal, we can safely dispense with it, and yet attain a perfectly harmonious and satisfactory result. It is not otherwise with furniture. Here also the best thing to do is to seek the conditions of form in the furniture itself. Theoretically this is a tolerably easy matter, but it is nevertheless beset with many difficulties as soon as we attempt to carry our theories into practice, as we are compelled in most cases to content ourselves with ready-made furniture, which is unavoidably influenced by the prevailing fashion. Under these circumstances, the only course left open to us is to endeavor to make up, by means of color, for at least some of the sins which we are compelled to commit against form.

Conditions of form to be sought in the furniture itself.

Defective style of modern furniture.

It is perfectly true that the furniture offered for sale at the present day has, unfortunately, an originally bad and increasingly corrupt style, to which it seems irretrievably wedded. Our chairs and tables and sofas still bear the marks of their Rococo origin (see Fig. 92, p. 142, and Figs. 95 and 96, pp. 148, 149), in the curved and twisted lines peculiar to the style so called. Hence they set at defiance all the laws of the structure of wood, and all the architectural principles growing out of the nature of supported and supporting parts, which apply to furniture as well as to buildings. The joiner is fully convinced that he has satisfied all artistic demands, if he has adhered to the curved line, though by so doing he has really sinned against them. It matters little to him that his chairs make holes in the walls, and that their legs are all the more easily broken, because by cutting against the grain of the wood, he has thrown the strain upon its weakest part. The upholsterer skilfully hides the patchwork which the use of curved lines necessitates. If the chair should break, he will have an excellent opportunity of making a new one, and meanwhile fashion may have changed in some trifling particulars, though unfortunately without probable improvement in style or character. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at

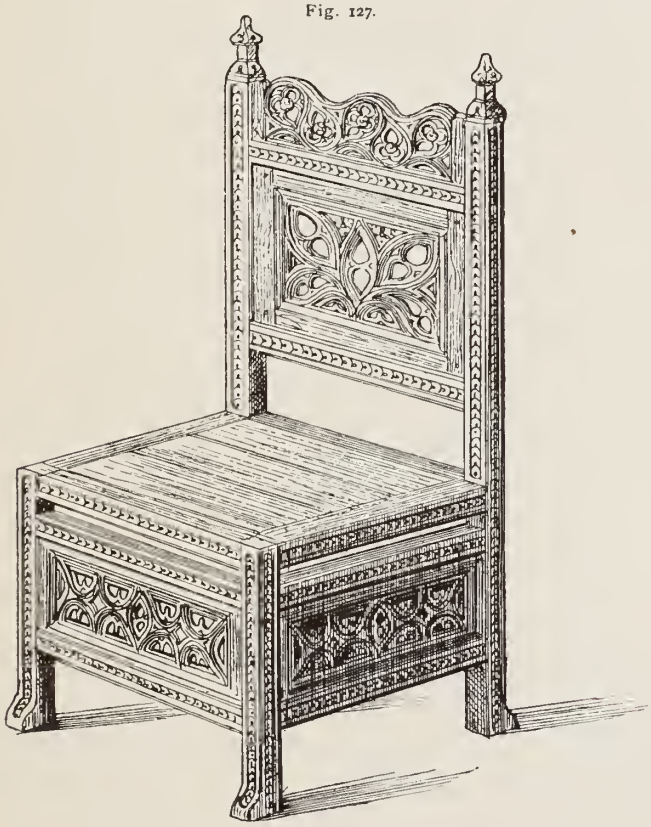
Noticeable violation of structural and static laws.

that our modern furniture grows poor and shabby as it grows old, and is sent to the attic, or thrown into the fire, while the works of our ancestors rise to the dignity of works of art, and increase in value with age.

How artists have attempted to overcome the defects of modern cabinet-maker's work.

Our *artists*, being fully aware of the worthlessness of modern cabinet-maker's work, have therefore always tried to overcome the difficulty by adhering more or less strictly to some one historical style, whenever they were charged with the task of designing furniture of the better sort. Some of them have sought their ideal in Greek furniture, as represented on ancient vases and in mural paintings, but their course has neither been approved of nor followed, either because our drawing-rooms do not supply Greek men and women to set it off to advantage, or because the designers could not free it from that monotony,

Fig. 127.



CHAP. VIII.

which equally characterizes the so-called antique furniture of the first French Empire. (See Figs. on pp. 160, 161.) Other artists again have tried to make use of the Gothic style in furniture (Fig. 127), and have found many, and even enthusiastic adherents among the admirers of the Middle Ages and Mediæval Art. It cannot be denied that the principle which underlies the construction of Gothic furniture, and which these artists followed (occasionally almost too rigidly) is a correct one, but in spite of this, or perhaps for this very reason, modern taste has protested against it most emphatically. The Renaissance, which adapts itself much more easily to our modern wants, and which has again and again been brought forward, has hardly fared any better, for its conquests have certainly not extended beyond the dining-room. Fashion has continued to favor the various French styles, the Baroque, the Rococo, and the style of Louis XVI., and all the efforts of our architects have vainly striven against it.

Gothic furniture imitated, but with little success.

Imitation of Renaissance forms proves hardly more acceptable.

French styles alone fashionable.

These reasons are in themselves sufficient to convince us that we must study the nature of furniture for ourselves, and take cognizance of the laws which grow out of our wants and out of the peculiar nature of the materials used. It is also quite clear that we must once for all give up the Rococo style of furniture, because, being contrary to nature, it is opposed to that harmony based upon the nature of things which we desire to bring about. We must aim at making furniture beautiful in itself, independent of any style. If this again should lead us to approximate to some one style because this style is itself less artificial than any other, it will be all the better for us, as we shall thus have obtained models which we can adhere to.

The Rococo style must be abandoned, and why.

This is the case with all those pieces of furniture which are not intended to be used as seats, and which may therefore be properly called upright furniture, such as cabinets of all kinds, sideboards, dressoirs, writing-desks, and dining-tables. If we examine into the nature of these pieces, we shall speedily find ourselves led to consider both the Renaissance and the Gothic styles. Certain conditions always exist in cabinets

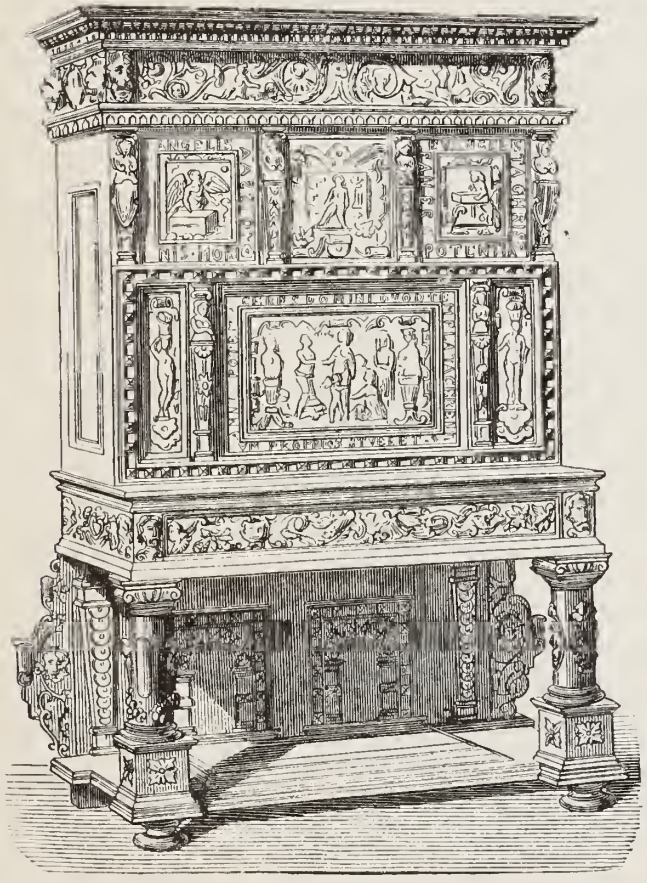
Upright furniture, such as cabinets, etc.

General characteristics of this kind of furniture, as guides to good design

and the like: such as shelves, doors, drawers, dividing members, as well as cornices, bases, and feet, all of which must be combined according to a structural system. They should be so ordered as to make the parts stand in symmetrical, well-considered relations to each other, and every part be so treated that its function — to support or to be supported, to separate

Form should express function.

Fig. 128.



or to unite, to enframe or to be enframed, etc. — shall be well expressed. This gives us the elements of a sort of architectural construction, as well as of a kind of beauty, based upon symmetry, grouping, proportion, and effects of light and shade, produced by advancing and retreating members. It is quite evident that the problem can be solved correctly without making the adoption of any definite style necessary.

Adoption of any special style unnecessary.

CHAP. VIII.

Now it will be found, upon close examination, that this was the way in which the artists of the Renaissance (see Plate XIX. and Fig. 128) and of the Gothic period (see Plate XIII.) proceeded in designing such upright pieces of furniture as we have under consideration. They stamped the peculiar features of their styles only upon the profiles and ornamentation of such objects by giving more or less of the character of the façades of houses or palaces, to their fronts especially, through the use of little columns and pilasters, round or pointed arches, gables, finials, and ornamental tracery. In this they went further than was necessary, for they employed structural elements ornamentally. (Fig. 129.) The Renaissance, especially in its latter period, yielded itself even more frequently and more unreservedly to this tendency than the Gothic, although in other respects it proceeded upon better principles. Pieces of furniture in the Gothic style really appeared to have more or less of the character of fixtures. The cabinets and presses were built against the wall; the seats were fastened to it in the shape of benches, and in their proportions were regulated by the panelling. It appeared as if the wainscoting and the furniture were the work of one and the same hand. By slow degrees only did the latter separate itself from the wall, without, however, laying aside the stiffness and heaviness resulting from this union. The Renaissance first rendered furniture movable; it lightened feet, proportions, and even ornaments, and made chairs and tables mobile. In the Baroque period, however, when the Renaissance became corrupt, heavier and more clumsy forms, encumbered with excessively high and massive ornamentation, were again revived.

Structural elements employed architecturally.

Immovable effect of Gothic furniture.

How the Renaissance first made furniture movable.

Heavy character of Baroque forms.

Leaving all and every special kind of ornament out of the question, we shall find that the Renaissance, in so far as the constructive element, the arrangement, and beauty of proportions are concerned, offers the most eligible models for such upright pieces of furniture as we have now under consideration. If we take them as models, or rather follow the principles embodied in them, we shall obtain simple, and therefore cheap, correct, and beautiful furniture, worthy to belong to

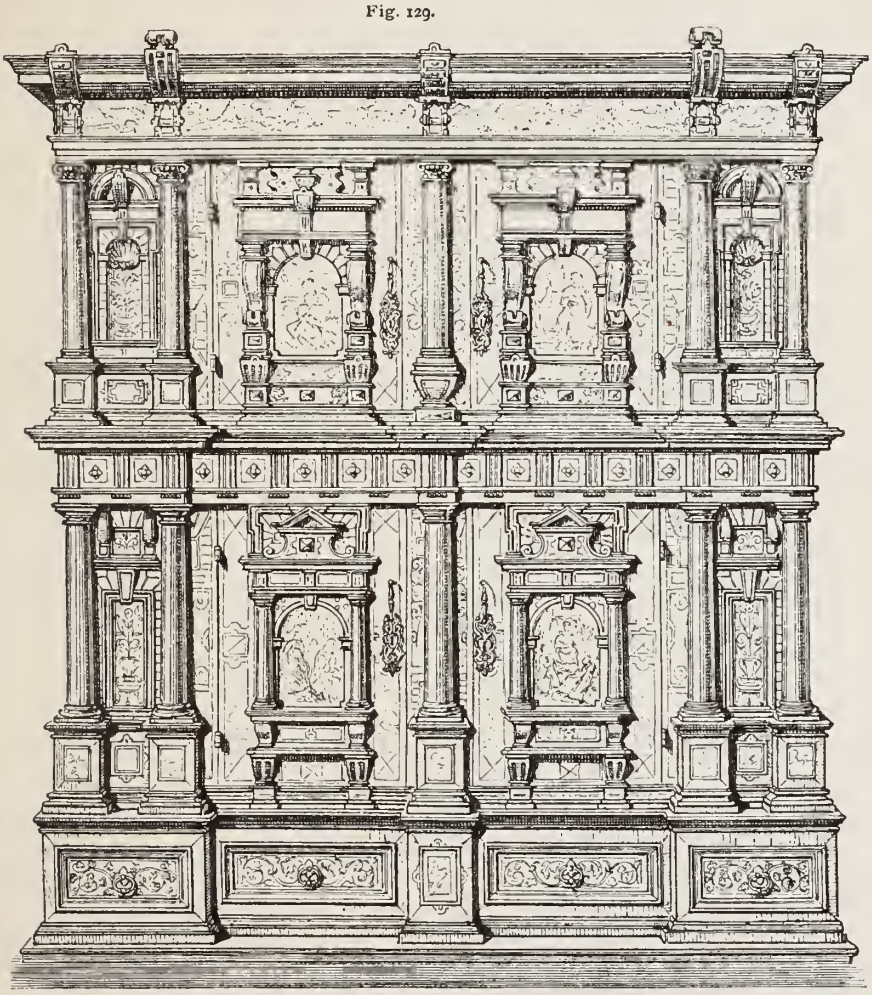
The most eligible models are those of the Renaissance.



MODERN CABINET.

any establishment ordered on correct principles of taste. Furniture in the Renaissance style will admit of being decorated as richly as we please. (See Plate XLIV.) We may cover it with carved work, either in the exquisite low relief of

Fig. 129.



the early Renaissance, which is so wonderfully well adapted to this purpose, or in the more vigorous style of the Cinquecento; or we may decorate the flat surfaces with wooden mosaics, ivory inlays, and even with a mosaic of metal and tortoise-shell, in the style of Buhl-work. So long as the drawing is

Possible modes of decoration.

CHAP. VIII.

correct and beautiful, and the colors harmonize, we may make good use of all these methods in the decoration of our rooms, as our object is to adorn them in a natural and unconventional manner.

Errors to be avoided.

There are, however, some errors which we must take care to guard ourselves against. In the first place we should avoid overloading the furniture with ornament, and, in the next place, be careful not to treat the carved work, and especially that upon our large presses and cabinets, too elaborately with file and graver, as if it were of metal and had to be chased.

How wood should be treated.

Wood is a material which requires bold treatment, showing the hand of the artist, which is always evident in the classical works of the Italian and German Renaissance, as well as in those of the later Dutch school. The excessive elaboration of ornament is an error frequently committed by modern

French tendency to excessive elaboration of ornament.

French wood-carvers. Fourdinois, for instance, exhibited a large cabinet at the last Paris Exhibition (1867) which was so exquisitely and richly finished that the directors of the South Kensington Museum, who purchased it, thought it advisable to enclose it in a glass case. This proceeding, although intended to show their high estimation of the work, really condemned it; for a piece of furniture six feet in height was certainly not made to be put under glass. I often find that another mistake, which I cannot allow to pass unnoticed,

Bookcases.

is frequently made in bookcases, that is to say, in those which are closed by glass doors. I will not protest against the glass doors, which protect the contents of the case from the dust, although they are inconvenient and generally superfluous, but I must express my disapproval of the white, opaque ornamentation with which the glass is frequently covered, and which

White opaque ornament objectionable, and why.

completely conceals the books. It is objectionable for two reasons, firstly, because it really looks as if the proprietor were ashamed of his books (that is, of his culture) and therefore desired to hide them, and secondly, because these white surfaces tend to destroy all harmony of color in their surroundings. Instead of being an ornament, they are an ugly blemish, while the books with their colored backs and delicate gold

tracery are really in themselves a most excellent decorative element. It follows that glass doors, if they are to be used at all, should be made of simple, transparent panes.

Ornament applied to tables.

In regard to tables I have also a few remarks to make. The top of a table, in view of the uses to which it is to be put, really needs little or no ornament. Its most suitable and natural decoration would be a border of wooden inlay; and even the whole of its surface might be covered with some simple, regular pattern. When, however, views, or, still worse, scenes from history, take the place of such patterns proper limits are transgressed. Oil-paintings are still more out of place, for unless they are scratched and rubbed off, they will render the table absolutely useless. Chinese lacquer is suitable for small ornamental tables, as it is very durable. Recognizing that the tops of tables are unfit places for rich decoration, artists have thought it necessary to turn their attention more especially to the legs. But in this they have also gone quite too far. To place whole troops of children and genii under the table, in the closest proximity to our feet, and even to execute them in so costly a material as gilded bronze, seems to us altogether improper, even if it be the fashion. Again, the revived Gothic of our own day errs in a different way, when it decorates the lower surface of the table top with all manner of prickly knobs, pendants, and excrescences, which painfully remind the unwary mortal, who happens to put his legs under it, that he is human. The true Gothic style was much simpler, and if it cannot be denied that in the time of its decadence it sometimes fell into similar errors, it is certainly unwise to imitate them. There is another feature peculiar to Gothic tables (see Fig. 64, p. 86), which might be reintroduced with greater advantage, namely, their crossed or spreading legs, — a much more solid, well-looking, and also a more æsthetically correct feature than the four isolated legs of our tables. The four foot-boards, which were formerly introduced to connect the legs, have also been dropped, without adequate reason. All these things, which, as the simplest consideration will show us, are suggested by the inherent

Objectionable methods of treatment.

The legs of tables.

The lower surface of table tops.

Gothic tables, and what is worthy of imitation in them.

Foot-boards desirable.

CHAP. VIII.

peculiarities of the table, were done away with by the Baroque style and the Rococo, as incompatible with the projecting scrolls of the first, and the curved lines of the last. It rests with us to return to nature and to reason. Much might also be said about sideboards and buffets. These pieces of furniture have two uses, — the one being to serve as tables for the final ordering of the dishes at meals, the other to hold and to show off the tableware. Hence they are at once tables and cabinets. In our day the lower half of the cabinet is generally too heavy, while the upper part is too light, especially when it has no back and consists simply of an *étagère* with slender, twisted columns. The sideboard of the sixteenth century, as well as that of the Gothic period (see Plate XIX., and Fig. 60, p. 79) had a high back crowned with a projecting roof. This gave form and finish to the whole, and, moreover, furnished an excellent background for the tableware set against it. Whenever at the present day we innovate upon the prevailing fashion, and endeavor to solve the problem in a more artistic way, we generally find it impossible to do so satisfactorily. Groping about, we now make the upper part low, with a back and brackets; then turn it into a cabinet with doors, which projects altogether too far; or perhaps we combine the two together. To this we frequently add carved objects of still-life, consisting of dead birds and other game, which are set against the panels, as if to make up for incorrect form and the want of a fundamental idea. We are, however, generally wanting in that which is above all things necessary to give effect to such pieces of furniture, namely, objects worthy to be displayed upon them. Everywhere the heirlooms of a better age have, on account of bad times or want of taste, passed from the house into the melting-pot, into the shops of second-hand dealers, or been cast aside as rubbish. Old majolicas, jugs, and dishes were disdained when porcelain became the fashion. In this people were to some extent justified. Meanwhile, however, the forms of our porcelain-ware have become so vulgar and barbaric, and its decoration so common-place, gaudy, and inharmonious, that it looks badly upon any decent sideboard, and to exhibit

Sideboards and buffets, their uses and proper treatment.

Renaissance and Gothic sideboards.

Modern attempts at innovation generally unsuccessful.

Paucity of material.

it demands a certain degree of courage on the part of the owner. Modern glassware, whether it be cut crystal, or colored, is mostly on the same level. Thanks to its metallic lustre and its reflected lights, silverware has at least the advantage of showing off effectively against the dark background, although its forms, up to the present time, are in no wise to be commended. Under these circumstances the old and despised earthenware has come into favor, and despite the crudity of its material, produces a truly artistic effect even on our modern sideboards. As, however, that which was formerly cheap has now become an expensive luxury, it is fortunate that good imitations of this ware are again beginning to bring it within the reach of many people, if not of all. Bad as the case is with our sideboards, it is even better than with our so-called *étagères*, — slender, meagre-looking stands of made-up construction, intended to hold knick-knacks. The knick-knacks and the stands suit each other perfectly, for they are equally valueless. These ornamental trifles may sometimes have an extraneous value. Some tender recollection, some memory to which the heart clings, may belong to them, but artistically, whether judged by themselves or as decoration, they are utterly worthless. They are nothing but toys fit for children. It cannot in truth be denied that the love for antiquities sometimes rests upon no better grounds. Collectors are frequently actuated by the most absurd and foolish motives, preferring antiquity to beauty. But this point of view is justifiable only in historical or scientific collections, a dignity to which the collections of private persons can aspire in very rare cases only. To the true lover of art the mere fact of antiquity cannot give value to an object. Intelligent people collect antiquities simply because a sounder taste prevailed in the earlier periods of art, on which account more of beauty and harmony is generally to be found in objects belonging to those periods than in those produced in modern times; but age alone offers absolutely no guaranty of excellence and beauty. It is because our amateurs do not recognize this, that we so often find their rooms filled with worthless rubbish.

Modern glass and silver ware.

Earthenware now the fashion.

Étagères.

Antiquity in itself cannot make an object valuable.

CHAP. VIII.

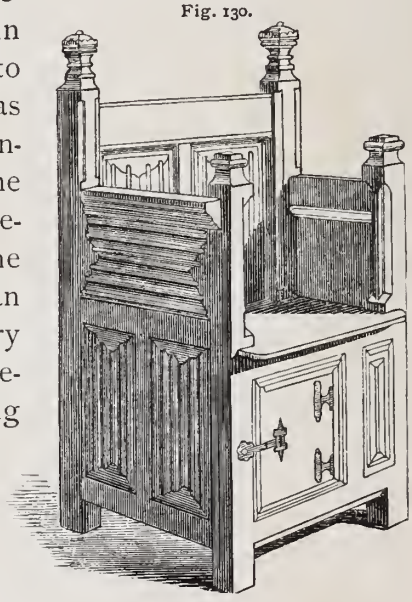
The considerations which should determine the forms of seats.

After this digression let us return to furniture. The questions involved in the construction of seats, which are also still affected by the Rococo style, are much more difficult to answer than those concerning what has been designated as upright furniture. Human comfort and ease have now to be considered, and it would really seem as if the Rococo forms were best adapted to satisfy their demands. Pure intellect, that idol which ruled in the drawing-room of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, now insists upon being perfectly free and untrammelled, and the body must therefore be set at rest so completely that it will not make itself felt. To attain this end special seats were invented for the drawing-room, such as the sofa and, above all, the low arm-chair, with the curved back, whose upholstery is admirably adapted to fit dorsal lines, and accommodate dorsal weakness. It would be useless to fight against merits such as these; for every attempt to prevent the satisfaction of a need in our modern civilization, by stoically ignoring the feebleness of human bodies, will result in failure. We must therefore make this need a factor in our calculations, and endeavor to construct our seats as correctly as possible, without imitating the incongruities and absurdities of the Rococo on the one hand, or renouncing ease and comfort on the other. That, however, is not an easy task to accomplish, and every artist who has worked in this specialty knows that there is nothing more difficult than to make a sofa which is both comfortable and artistic.

The sofa and the arm-chair.

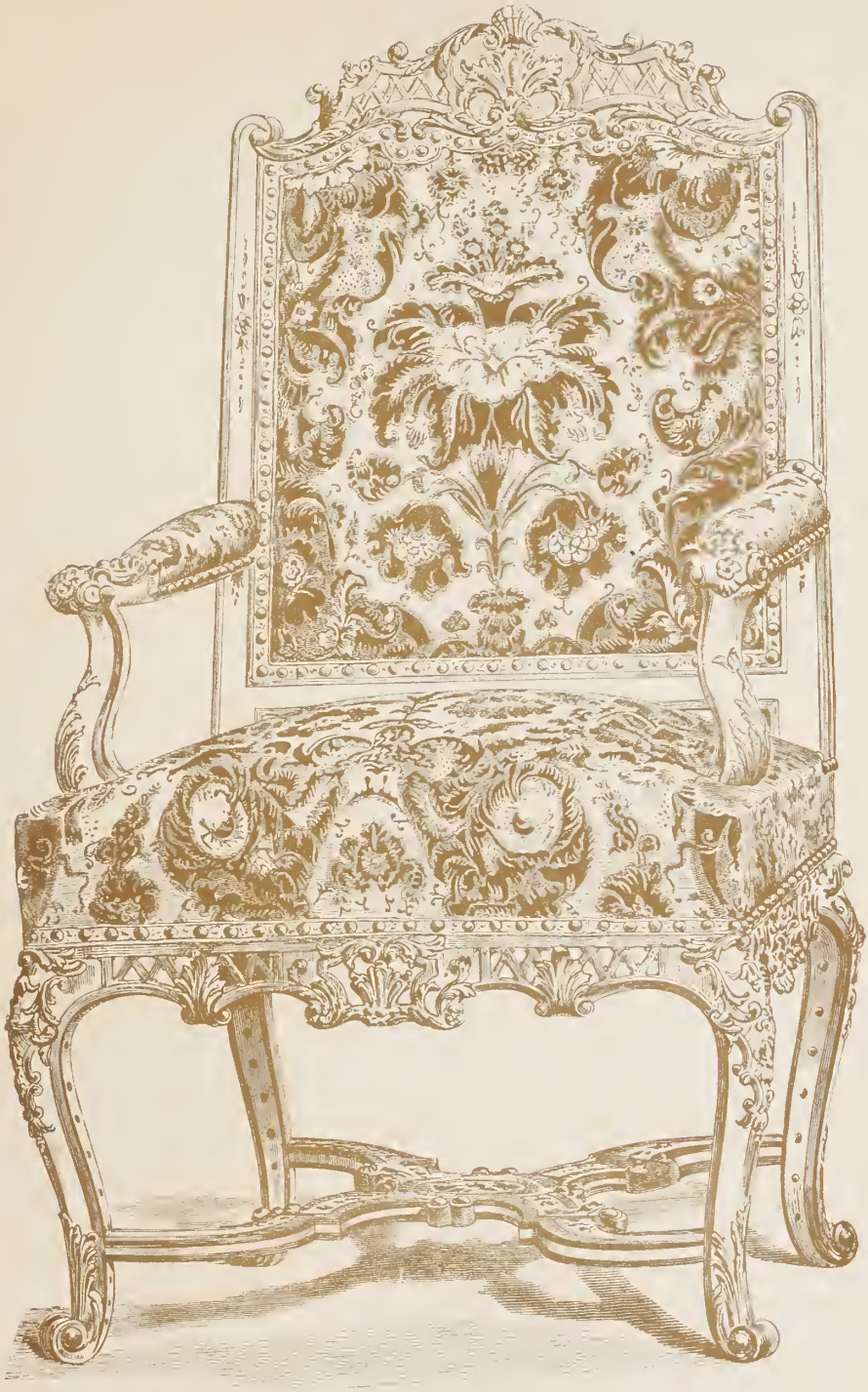
Comfort to the body a *sine quâ non*.

Fig. 130.



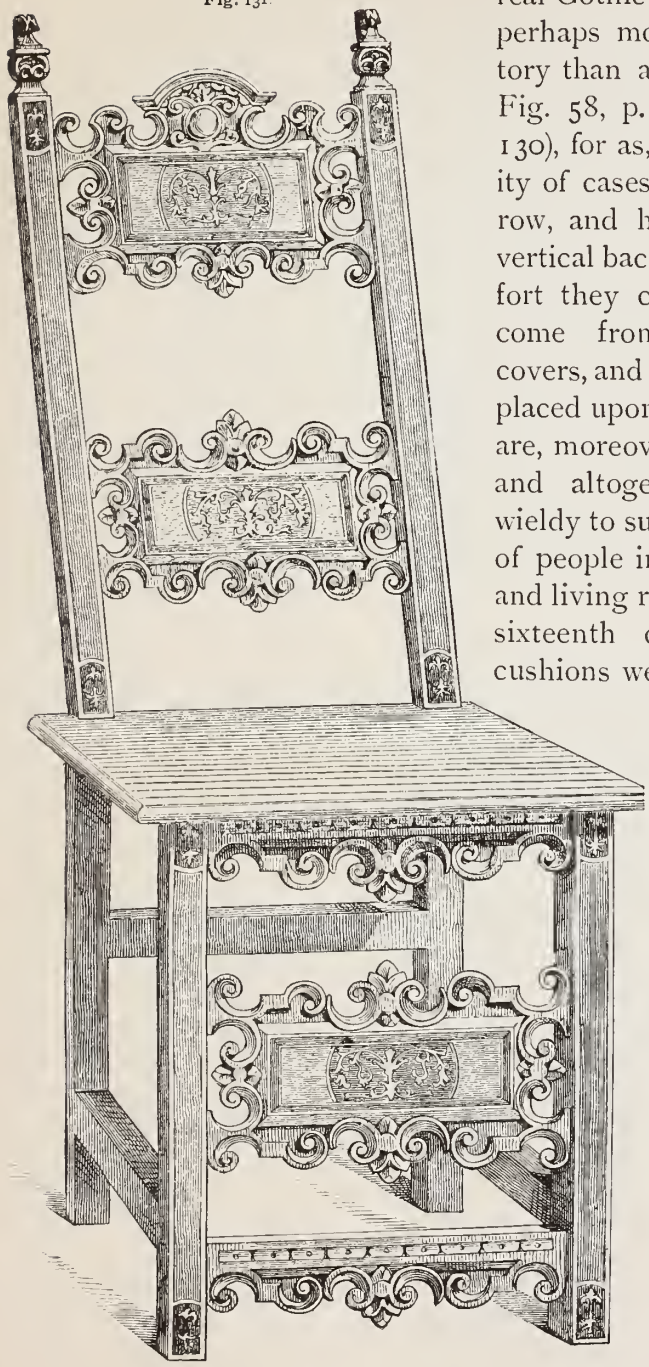
Where models are to be looked for.

The past can be of but little service to us here, as Rococo seats (see Fig. 92, p. 142, Fig. 96, p. 149, and Plate XLV.), although good in one respect, are failures in another. As for



ROCOCO FAUTEUIL.

Fig. 131.



real Gothic seats they are perhaps more unsatisfactory than any others (see Fig. 58, p. 76, and Fig. 130), for as, in the majority of cases, they are narrow, and have high and vertical backs, all the comfort they can offer must come from back-cloths, covers, and loose cushions placed upon them. They are, moreover, too heavy, and altogether too unwieldy to suit the manners of people in our drawing and living rooms. In the sixteenth century loose cushions were exchanged for fixed upholstery, but still the chair-backs remained stiff. (See Plate XVIII. and Fig. 131.) The worst seats are those called "peasant's settles" (in Germany), which, strange to say, are most eagerly

Peasant's settles.

CHAP. VIII.

sought for by modern collectors, and are therefore extensively counterfeited. (See Fig. 87, p. 135.) With their high legs, their narrow seats, and their uncouth carved backs, and even carved seats, whose ornaments come into disagreeable contact with the most sensitive parts of our bodies, they certainly deserve to be classed as penitential chairs. They are rendered somewhat more tolerable, if lightly upholstered, or if they have their seats covered with gilt leather or velvet. It is very curious, indeed, that such stiff pieces of furniture should have been selected as particularly well fitted to be used in aristocratic houses for gentlemen's rooms. Such rooms often contain another curiosity in the shape of a seat, which, however, is of modern, and indeed even of the very latest invention. It is a kind of settle, of which it is difficult to say whether it should be called a smoking or a riding chair. It is used saddlewise, with the back in front of the sitter, and in this back, as in a box, all sorts of smoking appliances are placed ready for his use. The prior claims of our own time to the original idea of using the back of a chair as a box cannot be contested, and we should not be at all surprised if, as we progress further in the same direction, we should eventually have dining-room chairs, with backs constructed as receptacles for food and wine, or chairs for the boudoir converted, in like manner, into sewing and toilet tables. An individual may sometimes by way of a change yield to the temptation of seating himself astride upon a chair, but it would hardly seem proper to introduce such a mode of sitting into general use, as this would be to recommence the freaks of childhood after we have attained the age of discretion.

Special furniture for gentlemen's rooms.

The German smoking-chair.

Renaissance seats of less questionable shape.

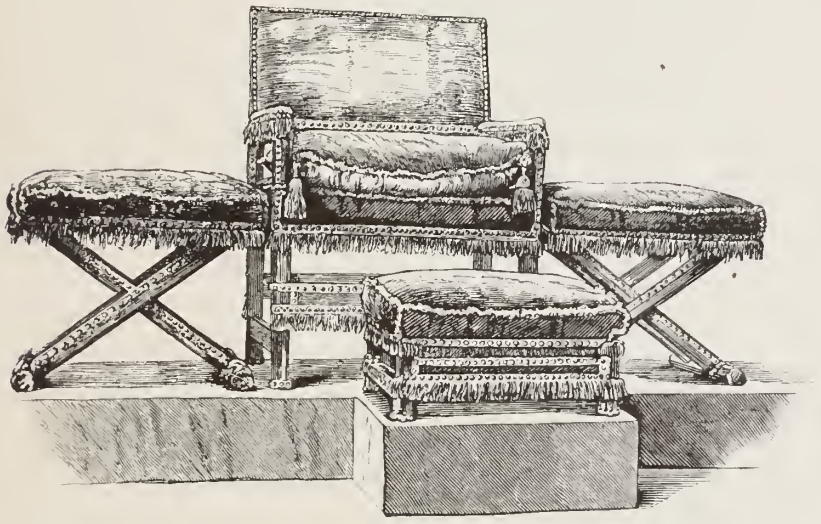
Together with its stiff-backed chairs the Renaissance has, at least in its later phases, left us other examples of forms for seats which may very well serve as a basis for the designing of our modern seats. We allude to the chairs, with or without arms, with broad and deep seats and moderately high backs, belonging to the time of Rubens, that is, to the first decades of the seventeenth century. Their backs are either upholstered, or only covered with a broad piece of leather,



velvet, or woollen stuff, extending from post to post. Their legs are either crossed, or connected near the floor by wooden strips or rods; their seats are lower than those of sixteenth-century chairs, and their arms are generally upholstered and richly ornamented with long fringes. Such chairs are represented in pictures of the studio of Rubens (Fig. 132), in the engravings of rich interiors by Abraham de Bosse, as well as in many *genre* pictures of the Dutch school down to a very late period. Well-preserved, genuine examples are also not infrequently to be met with, and from those we may learn that

Chairs which show that correct construction and comfort are not incompatible.

Fig. 132.



correct construction, which is regarded as of importance even in Rococo furniture, need not be destructive of comfort. (See Plate XLVI.) The seat should in all cases be first considered, and it ought to be made sufficiently deep and neither too narrow nor too high; next come the arms, which should not be too short. The back may have a slight inclination outward, although this looks badly, and may be avoided by following the example given in the old Egyptian arm-chairs (Fig. 133), whose upholstered cushions were made thicker below than at the top.

There is, however, still another expedient calculated to

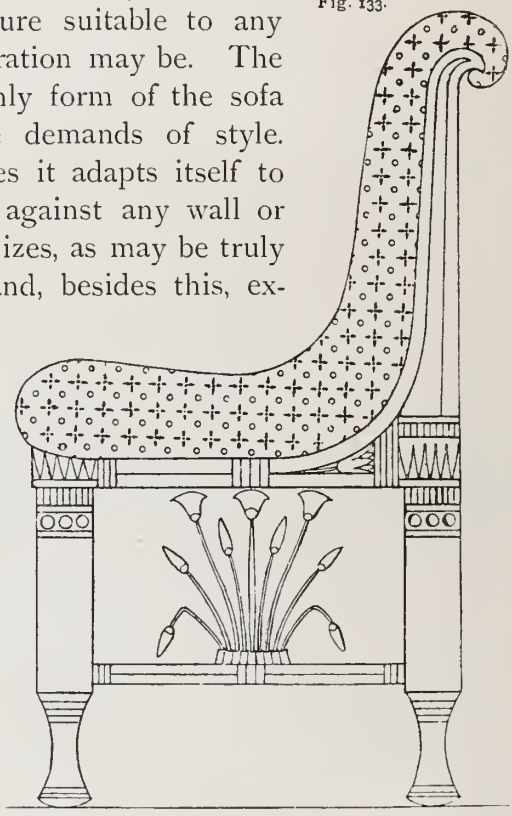
CHAP. VIII.

Sofas and chairs in the form of divans.

overcome all difficulties, namely, the adoption of the Oriental method, according to which we may make our sofas and chairs like divans, by upholstering them completely. By this method we shall avoid antagonism to any particular style, and obtain furniture suitable to any room, whatever its decoration may be. The divan is perhaps the only form of the sofa which answers all the demands of style. With its soft, vague lines it adapts itself to all conditions, fits well against any wall or into any corner; harmonizes, as may be truly said, with every style, and, besides this, exceeds all other forms of the sofa in comfort and ease. (Fig. 134.) Chairs constructed on the same principle present only this difficulty, that they have no such convenient handle for moving them about, as is offered by the wood-work of those constructed in the usual way.

The divan and its merits.

Fig. 133.



French imitations of Chinese bamboo chairs.

The East has, however, brought yet another kind of seat into fashion, of which little good can be said, namely, those small, slender, delicate chairs, known as "French fancy-chairs." These are directly imitated from painted, lacquered, and gilt Chinese bamboo-chairs, whose ornamentation is quite as flimsy as their construction and materials. Such chairs may sometimes serve a good purpose, but for general use they are too inartistic and too shapeless, and their excessive lightness and delicacy produces an unavoidable impression of fragility. They appear, indeed, as if they were merely made to be looked at, but not to be used. Whenever a somewhat heavy person

takes possession of one of them, the lady of the house is kept in a state of constant anxiety lest it should give way under him.

Chairs made of artificially bent wood.

Although chairs made of bent wood combine a measure of strength with lightness, and may therefore be used to advantage in certain places, such as coffee-houses, they also would

Fig. 134.



seem to be out of place in artistically arranged households, for their cane seats and framework details offer only thin and meagre lines to the eye, which properly demands apparent solidity in color and in form. Their deficiency in form is, indeed, even less objectionable than their deficiency in color, this being the main decorative factor which they can contribute towards the general harmony.

CHAP. VIII.

Color of wood used for chairs not a matter of indifference.

When we speak of color in connection with chairs, we of course allude more especially to the woven coverings of their seats, although the color of the wood of which they are made ought not to be passed over, since it is a question well worthy of consideration, whether light or dark wood should be selected. At present dark wood is almost the rule, while fifty years ago light woods were preferred, and indeed very properly, as they harmonized with the light-colored walls then in vogue. Whoever adheres to the latter should also retain the former, for the darker woods, such as black walnut, for instance, make too strong a contrast with light walls. If, however, a wall of pronounced tone or dark color be preferred, dark wood becomes a necessity, in order to avoid increasing the contrast of color by the still sharper contrast of light and dark.

Dark wood preferable in rooms whose walls are low in tone.

The question as to what the color and the patterns of the furniture coverings shall be is even more important than that of the color of the wood-work. The seats offer tolerably large surfaces to the eye, which must necessarily affect the general harmony, either as a disturbing or a beautifying element. The choice as to color is easy so long as we confine ourselves to stuffs of a uniform color, as it will in such case be dictated by that of the walls, or the reverse. It will not do to have the furniture and the walls of the same color, since the one should relieve the other; but there must be a quiet, subdued harmony between the two, as the large surfaces opposed to each other would otherwise form too strong a contrast. This error is generally observable in our elegant modern drawing-rooms.

Color of stuffs used as chair coverings.

Harmony in color between walls and furniture desirable.

Taste and art have never been reconciled to uniformity of color in furniture, and in the course of time all sorts of ornamentation that can possibly be applied to textile fabrics have been tried, while in our own day all of them are being tried together. And yet the limits within which we ought to confine ourselves in this matter are in reality quite restricted, and can be defined without much difficulty. Objects upon which we are to sit, or against which we are to lean, must present

Limits defined.

neither sharp points nor relief of any kind. This proposition appears to be quite self-evident, but it is nevertheless frequently ignored. As it was customary to carve the backs and seats of "peasant's settles" in relief, so nowadays an effort is made to give an effect of relief to the embroideries intended to cover the same parts of chairs, by raising them artificially. The latest fashion has given us cushions whose colored chess-board-like patterns represent in actual relief what mosaics only appeared to give relief to. Absurd as was the error of the ancient mosaic workers, our own, made in the confidence of superior wisdom, far surpasses it, and indeed attains the acme of bad taste. The period of powdered wigs and the Rococo style, being in search of new uses for its tapestries, applied them not only to the backs but the seats of chairs (see Fig. 92, p. 142), and thus decorated them with framed pictures, representing subjects ranging through every category of painting, from still-life and landscapes up to figure pieces. Modern art-industry, still blind to the error of its ways, has followed this example in the wake of the French manufacturers, who regard their productions of this kind as the highest triumphs of skill. Chairs are undoubtedly made to sit upon, but it is questionable whether pictures are fit for the same purpose. If so, why may we not use oil paintings with equal propriety as coverings for the seats of chairs? Their irregular spaces and convex surfaces ought in themselves to have saved us from committing such an absurdity.

Raised work applied to embroidery.

Tapestry used to cover the backs and seats of chairs.

In our well-to-do middle-class houses we generally meet with less pretentious chair coverings, but even these are not faultless. The stuffs with large flower-patterns (Fig. 135) such as modern art-industry has brought into fashion, even if looked at separately, are not only hard and too pronounced in effect, but they also falsify the real form of the furniture which they cover. At present they are gradually disappearing, but striped stuffs have been introduced in their stead, which are so arranged that a broad, showy band runs up and down through the middle of them over a ground of uniform color. The effect produced is hard and unartistic. Still

Chair coverings of a less pretentious character.

Striped stuffs improperly applied.

CHAP. VIII.

The ornament of a chair should not have any special direction.

another objection may be urged against it, namely, that this stripe gives a fixed direction from below upwards which does not belong to the chair. The nature of this piece of furniture is rather of a kind which would require that its complete ornamentation should not have any special direction. If,

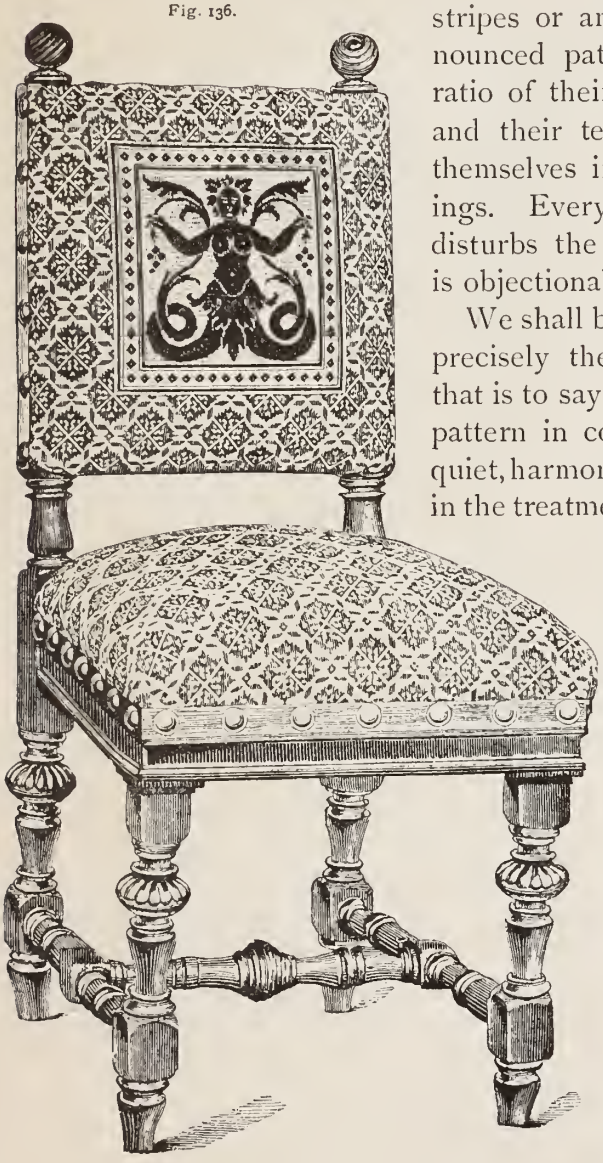
Fig. 135.



therefore, we pass from plain to figured stuffs, we shall have to choose some small, delicate pattern of no great pretensions, which will adapt itself to all curves and positions without being distorted. (Figs. 136 and 137.) The colors should not be calculated upon the idea of contrast, but upon that of

their capacity for forming part of a quiet, harmonious whole. This again is in accordance with the Oriental method. We should be inclined to tolerate stripes or any other very pronounced pattern only in the ratio of their unobtrusiveness, and their tendency to merge themselves in their surroundings. Everything that rudely disturbs the general harmony is objectionable.

Fig. 136.



The proper treatment of curtains.

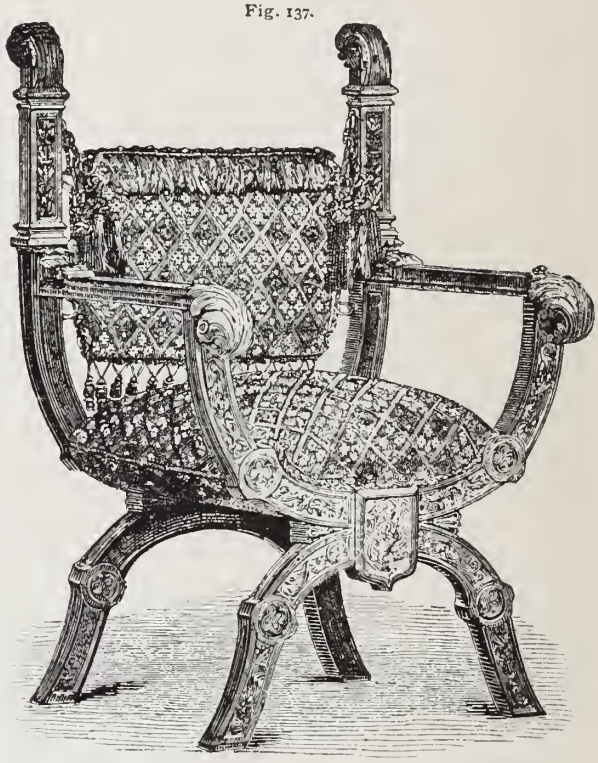
We shall be obliged to adopt precisely the same principle, that is to say, an unpretentious pattern in combination with a quiet, harmonious scale of color, in the treatment of curtains, unless we are content to use plain materials, which are always to be recommended. As door-curtains (portières), but more especially window-curtains, are intended to be gathered together in folds, it follows that the patterns of stuffs used for them should be such as will not be distorted when gathered in folds. A rich ornamental composition, having any independent value of its own, would be

Rich ornamental compositions out of place upon curtains.

CHAP. VIII.

destroyed by such treatment, and therefore become a disturbing element. This is a mistake which is nowhere so frequently exemplified as in the most artistic modern French curtains. Art is misplaced where it conflicts with use. Neither can vertical stripes be recommended, such as are often seen in the materials at present in fashion, although they would seem to be in harmony with the vertical direction of the curtains. Observation, however, shows us that stripes produce a bad effect when the curtains are gathered together in oblique folds, after the usual fashion. The effect is somewhat better when they are allowed to hang straight down, without being looped up. We may add that Turkish curtains with broad horizontal stripes composed of delicate, many-colored ornaments, do not answer all the requirements of style, since the horizontal line does not coincide with that of the curtains. But they are nevertheless preferable to those with vertical stripes, because on the one hand the horizontal line is not broken by the folds, and on the other they are without exception correct and beautiful in color. The arrangement of the curtains must also not be lost sight of. Our modern methods are much too artificial, and the sins against taste

Fig. 137.

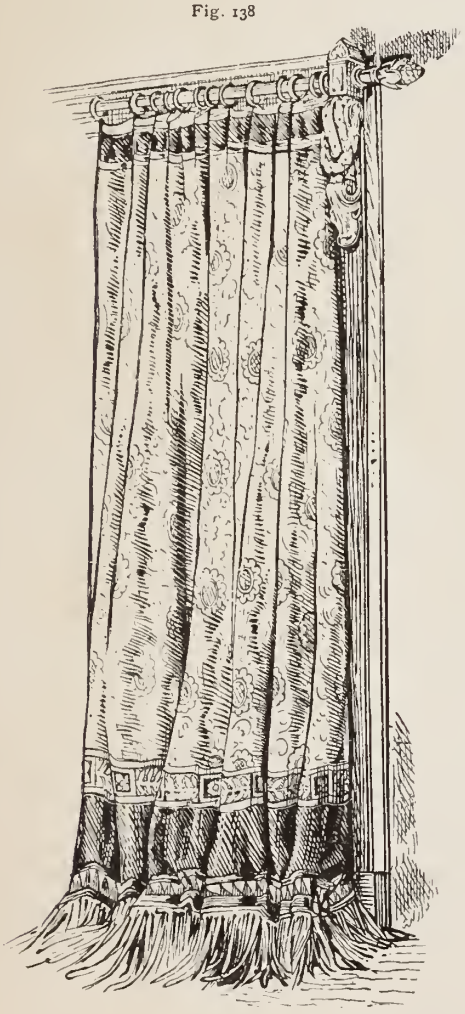


Why Turkish curtains with broad party-colored stripes are not altogether satisfactory.

Modern methods defective.

which we commit in our oddly shaped cornices, and in the fantastically scalloped and dented outlines of our lambrequins and the like, are perfectly unnatural. We should never forget that we are not to depend upon lines but upon folds and color to produce a desired effect. In an unpretentiously but artistically decorated room, the simple arrangement of a rod, with rings sliding easily upon it (Fig. 138), will be quite sufficient. This is especially true of door-curtains.

Fig. 138



The proper office of curtains defined.

The true end and aim of curtains is to moderate the light, and to do away with or hide the harsh contrast produced by the sharp lines of the window-frame relieved against the bright light of the sky. After a fashion this may also be attained by white lace curtains, which are recommended by their low price. Their neat appearance, which is always pleasant, is another argument in their favor, although the main reason for their use is probably to be found in the fact that they admit more light than any other kind of curtains into our rooms, which are for the most part quite dark enough. This reason undoubtedly weighs in their favor as against colored curtains; but lace curtains, if used, should at least be sup-

White lace curtains.

CHAP. VIII.

plemented with colored drapery of some sort, as this will form a transition between them and the room, whose harmony is based on color. The broad white surface of the lace curtains is in itself anything but beautiful, and can only be allowed as an unavoidable evil. In England as well as in France lace curtains are therefore always combined with colored curtains, but the methods followed in the two countries differ. In French "salons" a single large lace curtain hangs straight before the window between dark curtains, which are gathered up to the right and left in folds. The large space thus left open in the middle offers a good field for the display of a single, rich ornament. In English drawing-rooms, on the contrary, lace curtains are hung behind dark curtains, so that their borders only are seen. This is also the case in Germany, when the colored curtains are not altogether dispensed with. In this latter case curtains should be of a simple pattern with a more ornate border, as they must necessarily be gathered in folds, and their lines broken. Machinery has, however, enabled us to produce elaborate ornaments consisting of whole forests and gardens, and we apply them to our curtains, without considering that these works of art will be distorted when put to the use for which they are intended.

French and English modes of using white lace curtains.

Such curtains should be of a simple pattern with a rich border.

I said above that white curtains insufficiently break the abrupt transition from the heavy, solid wall to the broad mass of light of the windows, and it is doubtless the observation of this fact which has lately led French manufacturers to introduce color into the white curtains themselves. They have tried to do this in a variety of ways, either by surrounding the curtains with broad colored borders, or by using colored and white stripes alternately in a vertical direction, or by relieving or bordering the designs themselves (which, according to the French fashion, consist either of ornaments or of figures) with color. It cannot be denied that this system argues some progress in taste, and is worthy of imitation, but it is, nevertheless, open to several objections, which show that it does not satisfactorily solve the problem in question. The objections to it are those which we have already met, namely, that the

French ways of using color in white curtains.

Objections to such combinations.

ornamental or figure design in the one case is destroyed, while in the other the horizontal stripes produce an unpleasant effect, as soon as the curtains are looped up at the sides.

Having treated of curtains, of what we designated as upright furniture, and of seats and their coverings, we have almost exhausted the category of movable objects used about a house, and may now speak of the different character given to rooms as denoting and according with the different uses to which they are to be put. We shall first make a few prefatory remarks about certain points which are influenced by custom and fashion. In Vienna, for example, we usually find the sofa with the table before it, and the rest of the furniture placed against the front wall of the house between the two windows. It is true that the numerous doors which cut up the three remaining sides of the room, the stove, and the grand piano very frequently preclude the possibility of any other disposition, but in spite of all this it cannot be denied that whether we consider the view of the room which it offers, or the persons sitting there, whose backs are continually exposed to a cold draught, the place chosen is of all others the most uncomfortable and cheerless. Furthermore, this arrangement prevents the mirror from being put into its only proper place, as it barricades the way to it.

The character of a room should denote its use.

Disposition of furniture in Viennese houses.

The mirror is indeed a source of embarrassment to us, however we may deal with it, and for this, fashion is again to blame. If there is to be a mirror in the living-room at all, its purpose certainly can be no other than to allow those who dwell in the room to see themselves. To be able to do this, the mirror must hang in the dark, so that the light coming from the front may fall full upon the person looking at it. This can only be done by hanging the glass on the front wall, between the windows. No other position is equally good. If, however, the room should have only one window, or if the strip of wall between the windows should be too narrow, we shall evidently have to choose the next best position for self-observation. Fashion, however (in Vienna), obliges people to hang the mirror over the sofa, wherever that may be placed,

Proper place for the mirror.

CHAP. VIII.

as if it wished to prevent the gratification of vanity, which it generally still further impedes by hanging the glass horizontally instead of vertically. This makes it appear as if the person looking at himself was intended to do so while in a recumbent position. If there be a fireplace in the room, the mirror may properly be placed over it. (See Plate XLVII.) The objects of art on the mantel-shelf will thus be made visible from behind, the glass will be easy of access if we wish to see ourselves in it, and the whole room will be shown in agreeable perspective. When the mirror is placed opposite to the windows, it not only becomes impossible for us to look at ourselves, but the effect produced is that of a room with windows on two sides, and this is never agreeable.

The second best place for the mirror is over the fireplace.

Why the mirror should not be placed opposite the windows.

Character of rooms affected by fashion.

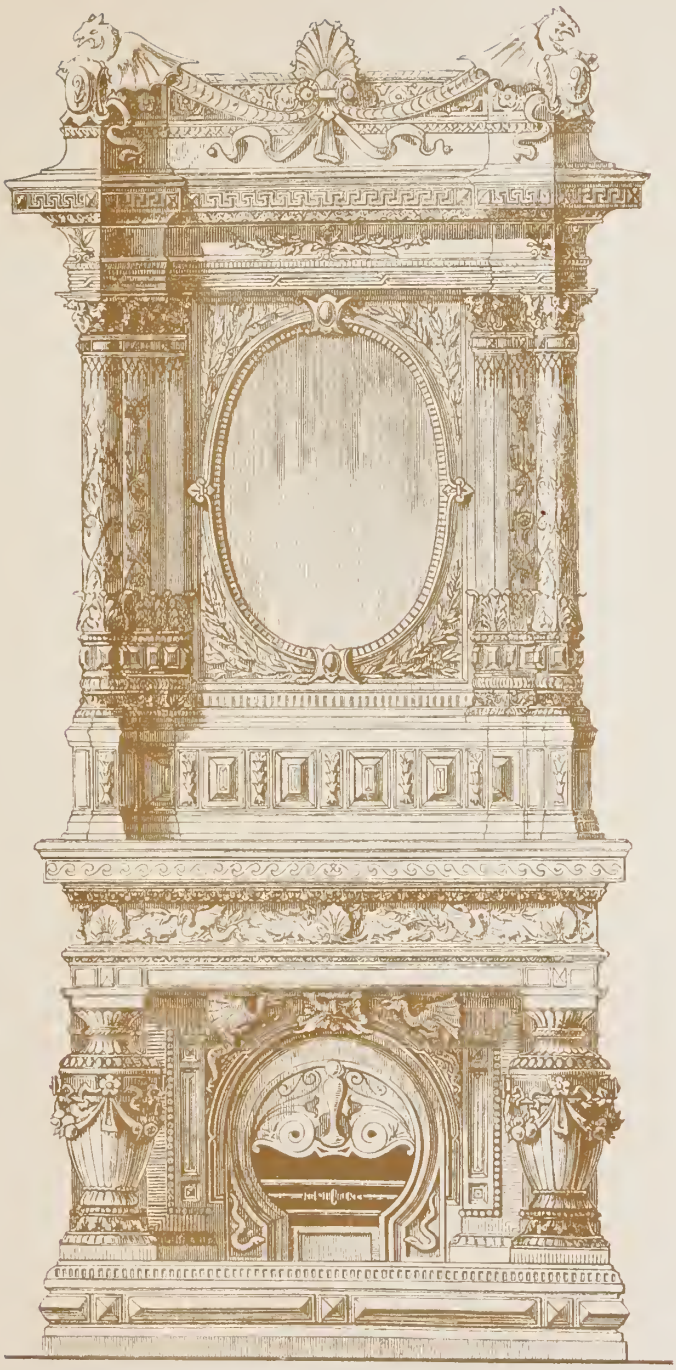
Fashion also, to some extent, influences the artistic character of the rooms according to their different uses. Dining-rooms, drawing-rooms, sleeping-apartments, gentlemen's rooms, libraries, etc., each have their special ends, which ought to find expression in their artistic decoration, without reference to fashion. That all English dining-rooms are at present hung in red is a fashionable whim, for it is impossible to understand why any other color would not do quite as well.

English dining-rooms hung in red.

The dining-room should have a quiet wall and a concentrated light.

A quiet, subdued wall is indispensable to a dining-room, because observation is concentrated on its central objects, that is to say on the dining-table and its guests, for which the wall serves but as a background, like the dark ground in a portrait. For the same reason a concentrated light is necessary, since the grouping of the figures in the room, which is always the same, compels us to proceed almost as if we were about to compose a picture. A dining-room should be deep rather than broad, and should have only one large window in its narrower wall. Thus all the persons sitting at the table, with but one exception, will be equally well lighted. Several windows, or, worse still, windows on several sides, give diffused light, and destroy the repose of the picture. At night one powerful light suspended over the centre of the table will be found best, as it sheds its rays in all directions, and annoys no one. Care must of course be taken to have the chandelier

It should have one central light over the table.



CHIMNEY-PIECE, WITH A MIRROR OVER IT

well proportioned in size, and so selected that in shape as well as in material it may harmonize with the rest of the room. A chandelier of Venetian glass sometimes produces a good effect, but for a dark and especially for a panelled dining-room, a brass chandelier in the elegant forms of the sixteenth century (see Plate XXXV.) is decidedly preferable. Our chandeliers of gilt bronze or of cut glass are better adapted to drawing-rooms. In the case of a long table, side-lights will help to increase the illumination, but, like the main light, they must be placed so high that those sitting at the table can look into each other's eyes without encountering their glare. That is, indeed, a self-evident proposition, and yet it is again and again left unconsidered.

Side-lights admissible with a long table.

As the wall is to be quiet, it follows that its ornamentation must also be low in tone. Realistic historical paintings are out of place, as they produce a picture within a picture. Old portraits in dark frames, on the contrary, look exceedingly well, so that artistic considerations alone would be sufficient to designate the dining-room as the place for large family portraits (see Plate XLIX.), even if we accorded no weight to the additional fact that the dining-room is pre-eminently the place where the family is daily brought together. Still-life, fruit and flower pieces, hunting and animal pieces, painted after the old manner, that is to say, full of color and yet excellent and sober in general tone, also make an admirable decoration for the dining-room, more especially as their subjects are in unison with its purposes. These purposes ought also to be kept in view when a part of the walls is to be decorated in fresco. The horrors of Greek mythology, or, worse still, such a history as that of the Argonauts, which treats of the most terrible marriage ever contemplated by man, are not fit for the dining-room, and yet this error has been committed by an intelligent Viennese artist of our own day. Enjoyment and pleasure, scenes of merrymaking, music and the dance, hunting and fishing, the seasons, and life in the country, — these are subjects suitable for the dining-room, no matter how they are treated, allegorically, in arabesques, or in *genre*-like

The decoration should be low in tone.

Pictures of a certain kind best adapted for the dining-room.

Subjects proper for fresco decoration.

CHAP. VIII.

pictures. Through them poetry and art will throw an idealizing halo around the material enjoyments of the table. (See Plate XLVIII.)

Proper furniture for the dining-room.

The character of the dining-room, the concentration of interest upon its centre, also demand that the furniture should be unostentatious, or at least decorated in a sober style. The sideboard, with its ornaments, of which we have spoken before, forms the principal piece; as the rest of the furniture consists of table and chairs only. For these the simple construction of the later Renaissance, with straight backs, is thoroughly appropriate. (Fig. 139.) No sound reason for

Dining table and chairs.

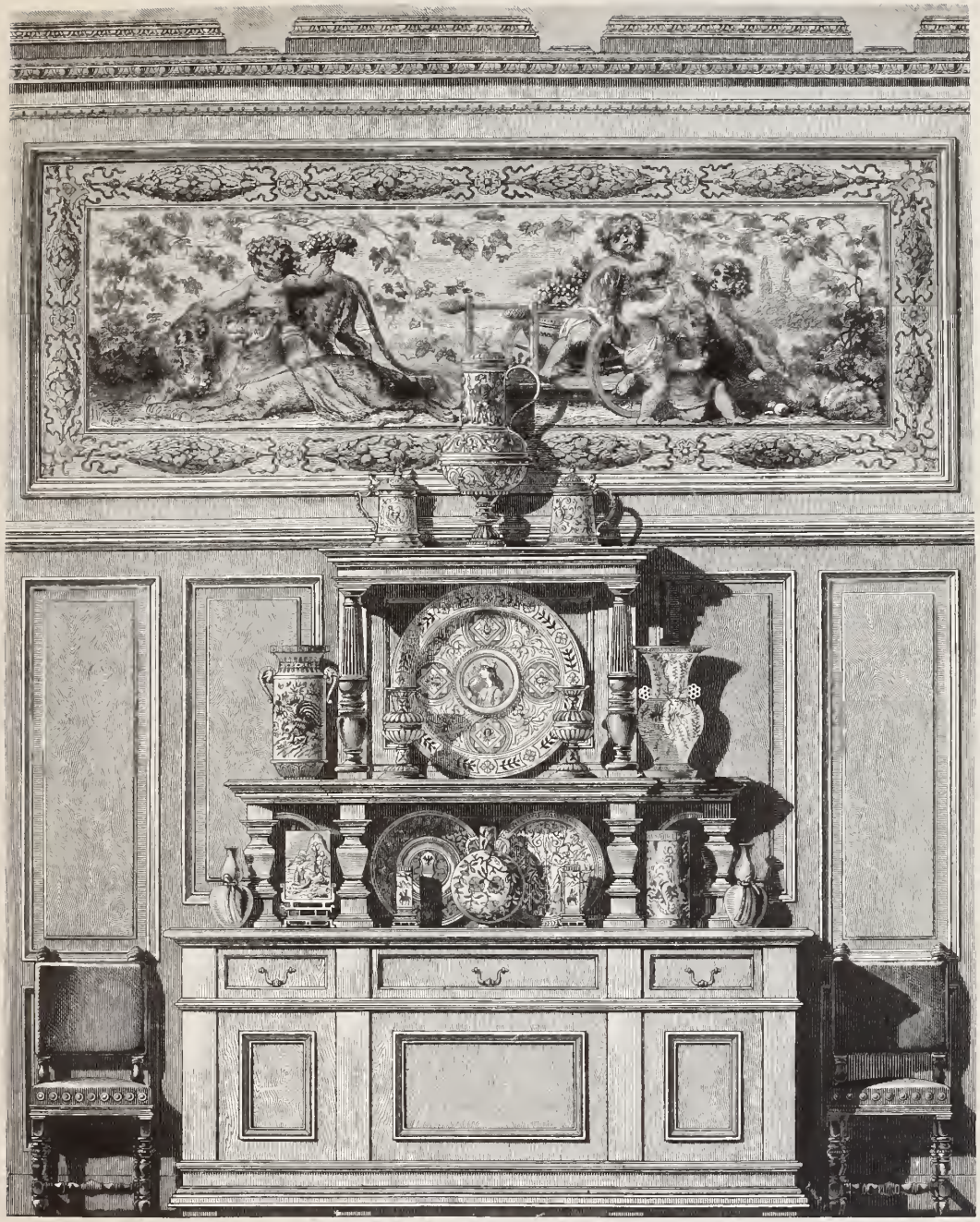
Fig. 139.



the present fashion of carrying chair-backs high up above the head of the sitter can be adduced, more especially as they necessarily stand in the way of the servants.

Having found that a sober, subdued style of decoration, which depends upon solidity of material and thoroughness of workmanship, rather than upon outward show, for its rich effect, is most desirable, we shall have to push the same principle still farther in the case of gentlemen's rooms, libraries, and studies, and very possibly reach the conclusion that for such rooms nothing is more suitable than absolute simplicity. These rooms are working places, where the mind is to collect itself and concentrate its powers. Profuse and varied ornamentation would tend to distract the attention and disturb

Furniture for gentlemen's rooms.



thought. Simple, comfortable seats, well-constructed bookshelves and cases of dark or black wood, with but little ornamentation; a colored carpet with an unpretending pattern; a dark, quiet wall; and lastly a few really noble works of plastic or pictorial art, — these appear to be what is needed to satisfy all æsthetic demands under the circumstances. (See Plate XLIX.) Bedrooms, on the contrary, require rather a cheerful decoration, neither too light nor too dark in tone. For such rooms a medium scale of brightness as well as of color is decidedly the best. Under all circumstances, however, we must have repose; but repose of a cheerful kind, a sort of warm twilight-feeling, growing out of the fusion of a variety of mild tints into one agreeable harmony.

What bedrooms require in the way of furniture.

In the drawing-room we may at last develop all the pomp and the luxury and all the outward show which the dignity of the house, in its contact with the world at large, may seem to demand. The drawing-room is the place devoted to society, the place where strangers are received, and it is therefore quite proper that the house should there exhibit its most brilliant aspect. The drawing-room, in all its characteristic peculiarities, is exactly the opposite of the dining-room, where interest, light, and society, to which all else forms only the background, are focused. The chandelier in the centre, the faces of the guests with light falling full upon them, the dark background against which they are relieved, — all this makes the whole room and the persons in it look like a picture with a concentrated light in the style of Rembrandt; and it is precisely from this point of view that we should manage the arrangement and the decoration of a dining-room. The character of the drawing-room, on the contrary, is that of dispersion. People are scattered about in groups; the furniture is disposed on the same principle; and the light diffused throughout the room. Modern custom, moreover, permits the company to move about at will, making a series of pictures whose groups dissolve and reform incessantly. This very liberty of movement, which constitutes one of the peculiarities and charms of our social life, is of itself sufficient to keep us from endeavoring

The drawing-room and its furniture.

The special character of the drawing-room.

CHAP. VIII.

to make one grand picture of the drawing-room having a distinctive artistic character of its own, with concentrated illumination, with well-balanced lights and shadows. Faces and figures are lighted, now from the front, now sideways, now again from the back. That is certainly not an advantage, but, as it cannot be helped, we must accept the picture as it is, rich, ever-moving, and ever-shifting. A brilliant and splendid background is suited to such a scene, wherefore the walls may be gay in ornamentation as well as in color, and decorative art may display all its resources on the ceiling. Glossy silks, which reflect the light, will be acceptable here as furniture coverings and as material for curtains, but velvet, which is absorbent, and therefore, when so used, presents dark, cavernous-looking gaps to the eye, is less to be recommended. Objects of art of all kinds, statues, statuettes, busts in the corners and on brackets, modern paintings with their more vivid, varied coloring, books in splendid bindings, and illustrated works on the tables, — all these things will find their fitting place in the brilliant medley. Such luxury of decoration and appointment is not simply a result of the desire on the part of the owner of the house to show that his drawing-room corresponds to the requirements of modern culture, whose neutral ground it is intended to be, but is to some extent necessary. Empty tables, bare walls, unfilled spaces, are nowhere so out of place as in the drawing-room, where a cool temperature heightens by opposition the warmth of the host's reception, and where conversation, as it touches upon an innumerable variety of subjects, everywhere seeks external incitement.

Brightness of colors and ornament desirable.

The richness and the varied character of the objects in the drawing-room should be properly controlled.

It is, however, quite as indispensable that this diversity, this rich assemblage of objects and of decoration, should be controlled by an intelligent, harmoniously ordering spirit. Every one of the details should in itself be refined and beautiful, and though separate objects may be united into groups, these groups, however different, must be well-balanced. Furthermore, that which is important should preponderate and dominate, while that which is of lesser importance should be subordinate, and

Important objects should dominate those of less importance, which should subserve the general harmony.



DINING ROOM.



LIBRARY.

HOLLAND HOUSE

subservient to the general symmetry; objects, which either on account of their difference in brightness or color would be discordant if placed close together, must be separated by some object introduced to mediate between them. The furniture, likewise arranged in groups, must be so disposed about the room as to offer attractive conversational centres, and care must be taken that one side of the apartment does not look crowded, while the other remains bare. Over these matters the artist has no control, and the arrangement must be left solely and entirely to the lady of the house. She must add the finishing touch, she must give scope to her own taste, and must show that she is not only intellectually, but also æsthetically and artistically the ruling spirit of her drawing-room.

Disposition of furniture.

These remarks bring us back to the principle which, at the very outset of our discussion, we pointed out as of the greatest importance, — to the rights and duties of individuality. We have most assuredly seen that, if we would order our dwellings tastefully and artistically, we must be guided by well-justified laws. These laws, however, leave the fancy a wide range, and do not in the least relieve us from the difficulty of selection. On the contrary, they lead us to make ourselves artists, at least in selecting, while fashion, which is indifferent to taste and art, leaves us no choice whatever, and forces things upon us which run counter to our knowledge as well as to our sense of the beautiful. The laws to which we refer enable us to satisfy our own inclinations, to stamp the impress of our own character upon our dwellings, while at the same time they throw all the responsibility upon us. This we are bound not to shun, but to accept, and, untroubled by the comments of our neighbors, or the requisitions of fashion, which to-day overthrows the idol of yesterday, endeavor to realize our ideal of a home according to the best of our ability, the dictates of reason and artistic experience. Proceeding in this manner, we need not fear that we shall miss our aim. It is hardly necessary to say, however, that long-continued and loving familiarity with our subject will be necessary to make us understand it thoroughly; but to gain this

Recapitulation.

The difficulty of selection not lessened by submission to laws of taste.

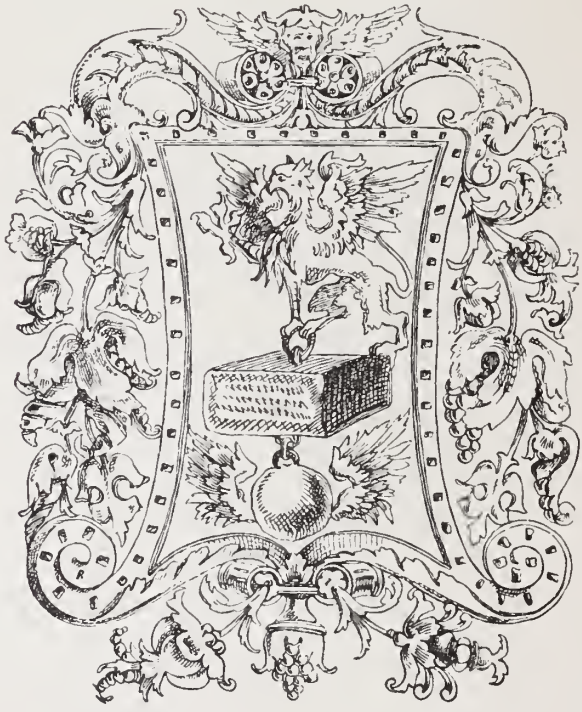
Laws defined.

The whole matter requires long and patient study.

CHAP. VIII.

familiarity is in itself an entertaining and amusing occupation for life, and the little world which we have created, which owes its existence to us, thus becomes a source of continual pleasure. To attain our end, we must give outward expression to that which is within us, idealize the things about us by imparting to them the harmony of our own minds, and give heed to the words of Rueckert, who bids us

"Feed the flame upon the hearth
With all the poetry of earth."



CHAPTER IX.

THE ARTISTIC DECORATION OF THE TABLE.

What the artistic impression of a room depends upon.

WALLS, ceiling, floor, and furniture first strike the eye on entering a house, and chiefly determine the artistic impression which it makes. These do not, however, include all the things in a house which belong to our subject, for there are a number of domestic utensils, demanding careful consideration, although they only occasionally become of real importance. We allude to objects used for the decoration of tables, and especially of dining-tables, such as table-covers and table-linen, vessels of faïence, porcelain, and glass, silverware, and table-ornaments, all of which are necessary parts of "Art in the House."

Accessories.

It is no doubt true that these things are dissimilar, but nevertheless they should not be considered apart from each other. They should neither be made nor selected without reference to each other, for they are after all intended to co-operate and to combine in the decoration of the table. It should also produce upon us the effect of a harmonious work of art, though this is a point of view which has been quite lost sight of. Manufacturers as well as purchasers invariably consider each object separately, and hence it has happened that the table offers nothing but white to the eye, and that the cook is in point of fact the only person who is privileged to introduce a modicum of color into this monotonous picture, although his art is certainly intended to minister to another taste than the æsthetic.

A generally harmonious effect should be aimed at.

CHAP. IX.

General and special laws of harmony.

All objects, of whatever class, are subject to the laws governing the harmony of the whole, while at the same time each class has its own laws, according to the materials of which its component objects are made, and the uses to which they are to be put. Nevertheless a capricious taste leads us to infringe not only upon the general, but even upon the special laws. In table-cloths, for example, with which we will open the discussion, we frequently find that too much emphasis is laid upon the centre, the large ornament placed there being made very conspicuous by its design as well as by its vividly contrasted colors. At first sight this may appear to be quite natural and correct, as the centre is that part of the table-cover which is directly under our eyes; but in emphasizing it too strongly we forget that, according to the fashion of the day, the table is destined to hold quite a multiplicity of objects which require a quiet, harmonious background. It follows that our centre-ornament, with its strongly contrasted colors, partly concealed and broken up by the objects placed on it, cannot but produce an unquiet and disturbing, rather than a beautifying effect.

Table-cloths.

Proper character of the centre of a table-cloth.

Borders should be broad and rich.

In the case of table-cloths it is consequently far better to lay the ornamental stress upon that part of them which falls down over the table, or, in other words, on a broad and rich border. For the whole of the central space a small, regularly disposed pattern will generally be sufficient, and even this can be omitted entirely, especially in the case of covers used upon drawing-room tables, which are as a rule overloaded with a great variety of colored objects of all kinds. Such plain covers, however, should never be very dark, unless indeed the color of the walls and of the furniture requires them to be so. Otherwise the table, especially if covered with a black or dark brown cloth, will have the appearance of a coffin, or of a cavity into whose depths we are obliged to look. Many table-covers such as we should recommend, of beautiful pattern, with a simple ground and a broad, colored border of an Oriental character, are represented in the genre-pictures of the Flemish and Dutch painters (see Plate L.), and as these pictures

Table-covers painted in Dutch and Flemish pictures.



DUTCH INTERIOR OF THE 17TH CENTURY.

(After Jan Steen.)

were evidently drawn from nature, we may conclude that the objects represented in them were then in fashion. Modern designers for table-covers will find in them a wealth of material, worthy of study and imitation.

Oriental table-cloths.

Another equally correct principle is observable in certain Oriental table-covers of Persian origin, which often find their way to us and are frequently used to decorate our drawing-room tables. These covers are composed of many small colored pieces of cloth, whose numberless seams are embroidered in white, forming a rich, regular pattern, after the manner of a mosaic. This method seems at first sight to be opposed to our decorative principle, but the contradiction is only apparent, for, owing to the exceeding richness and intricacy of the design, and the great number and diminutive size of the colored pieces of which it is made up, the pattern itself is hardly noticeable, and the cover as a whole offers to the eye a many-colored, quiet, and harmonious surface on which anything and everything may be placed without detrimental effect. By way of opposition to its richly decorated centre, the border which falls over the table is treated with great simplicity, and contrasts with it through the color of the ground, which is only broken here and there by a delicate ornament like a fringe hanging downward. The French manufacturers of printed stuffs have of late years imitated these table-covers quite successfully by printing similar richly colored patterns (the geometrical ground-forms of which they sometimes fill in with East-Indian flower designs) upon a flossy, rough, but still soft and pliant stuff called "bourette," made of refuse silk. These orientalized table-covers, which have the merit of being both beautiful and cheap, are very highly to be recommended.

Rich and intricate designs.

French imitations.

East-Indian and Chinese table-covers.

The East-Indians again, who make very beautiful embroidered table-covers, attach great value to rich and conspicuous borders, as do the Chinese, whose embroidered silk covers, as far as colors are concerned, in many instances produce an exceedingly brilliant and splendid effect. These covers, however, are marred by the Baroque character of the drawing,

Defects in drawing and character of subjects chosen.

CHAP. IX.

and the unsystematic and irregular use of subjects containing figures which often stand on their heads or are otherwise placed awry. Whenever it seems desirable to introduce figures into the ornamentation of table-cloths, their position must be carefully considered, and they must be treated in a conventionalized, flat, silhouette-like style, so as to give them a simply ornamental character.

Mediæval table-covers.

The ladies of the Middle Ages, or rather those of the sixteenth century, whose works I allude to more particularly, very often introduced figure-scenes into the table-covers which they embroidered for use in their own dwellings. These covers, in a majority of cases, consisted of linen cloths of various sizes, decorated with threads of colored silk or wool, sometimes also of linen. The subjects chosen were love-scenes taken from every-day life, from history, or from legend, treated in the costume of the period, surrounded by leafy ornamentation and interspersed with scrolls on which verses or phrases, exchanged in conversation between the persons represented, were inscribed. Generally speaking, the execution was simple enough, being mostly confined to colored outlines. Besides these we also find table-cloths and towels of the sixteenth century, sometimes in good condition, into which rich borders of lace-like ornaments in red have been worked with the needle. (See Plate LI., and Figs. 140 and 141.)

Table-cloths and towels of the sixteenth century.

Both kinds of ornamentation might be employed with profit in the manufacture of linen damask, and, in point of fact, a lately renewed attempt to introduce color into linen cloths on the loom, by weaving into them blue stripes generally embroidered with ornaments or animals, was made as far back as the Middle Ages. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the practice of weaving all sorts of colored ornaments and scenes into linen table-covers was continued, and as the designs generally consisted simply of outlines, they produced a very delicate effect. In our own day, however, the ornamentation of linen damask by means of color has been given up entirely, almost the only exception being made in the case of colored cloths for tea-tables, though these are so bad in style

Color introduced into linen damask.



BORDER EMBROIDERY IN LINEN SIXTEENTH CENTURY



Fig. 140.

that they do not deserve to be mentioned in connection with art. The peculiarly cool whiteness of linen, and its assuredly not to be undervalued neatness, are alone left to be the joy and pride of the housekeeper, for such ornamentation as there is cannot make itself felt with the means employed. Even coats-of-arms, monograms, and other marks are nowadays woven only in white.

Pure white linen table-cloths.

The means employed are limited to the alternation of glossy and dead patterns, produced by the damask weaving process, and this certainly seems a very modest method of producing an ornamental effect if it be considered that a design executed in this manner is visible only under certain conditions of light. To execute rich ornamental compositions, and even figures, in table damask, is little better than sheer waste, as they can never be seen to advantage, letting alone the fact that they must ultimately be hidden by plates and dishes. In spite of these considerations, linen damask with such designs, and even with representations of religious subjects, has nevertheless been woven, of late years, in imitation of a French fashion. It is, however, certain that not even the naturalistic floral ornaments which are

Wasted labor.

CHAP. IX.

such general favorites can be used to advantage for decoration of this sort, as they need color or shadow to bring them out properly, and as such generally irregular designs frequently become absolutely incomprehensible, because they can rarely be seen as a whole.

Flat ornaments in profile best suited for the decoration of white table-linen.

Arguing from these premises, we must conclude that it is best to confine the decoration of white table-linen to flat ornaments in profile, disposed in simple and regularly repeated patterns, so that any and every part upon which the eye may happen to fall shall produce a correct and pleasant effect. It is also evident that the greatest emphasis must

The border.

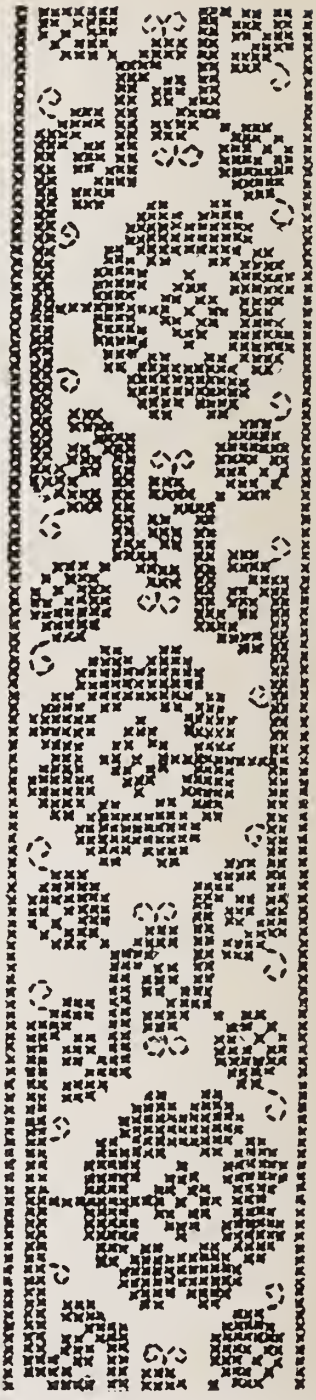
be laid upon the border, as this is the only part of the cloth which can produce a complete effect, since the space within the border is occupied by the centre-piece and the rest of the table-ware.

Seeing, however, that we are once more inclined to attach some importance to color in our dwellings, the question arises whether we should

Is color desirable in table-cloths and napkins?

not also return to the use of color in our table-cloths and napkins. Our æsthetic instincts are opposed to leaving such large surfaces, as they appear almost entirely unornamented; and even if we consider that the central part of the cloth is used in a manner which destroys the effect which its ornamentation would other-

Fig 141.





DAMASK TABLECLOTH, WITH COLORED BORDER.

wise produce, there still remains the broad border, hanging down over the edge of the table. It would seem all the more necessary that this border should be ornamented in color, as, without it, the transition from the table-ware to the dark color of the chairs is too abrupt and inartistic.

Character of colored ornament in the border.

A variety of reasons could be given to show why the colored ornamentation introduced into the border must necessarily be limited in its range. In the first place, the colors must be fast and of the best quality, so as to be able to stand repeated washings, and there are but few that can be so fixed in the linen as to answer these requirements. Of these few red and blue are the most prominent, and of these two blue would seem, æsthetically speaking, to be that which will best harmonize with the cool white. Secondly, a white surface, such as that of a table-cloth, will not bear to be heavily ornamented, as the contrast would be too marked; the lines of the ornament ought, therefore, to be rather delicate, and the color should be sparingly employed. Lastly, the decoration is unavoidably restricted by the peculiarities of the technical process by which linen damasks are produced.

French attempts successful.

Articles of German and Swedish manufacture.

Of late years attempts have been made (especially by the French) to introduce white table-cloths, napkins, and towels with borders of red, blue, and yellow, and, judging by the specimens shown, these attempts have been quite successful. (See Plates LII., LIII.) Goods of a somewhat different, but very attractive kind have been manufactured by a firm at Tabarz, in Thuringia. In accordance with an old, inherited tradition they are interwoven with stripes of a small checkered pattern in red or black, between which mottoes are introduced, in a thoroughly artistic manner. The effect is astonishingly good. Woven stuffs of a similar sort are also produced by the Swedish peasants in villages of the province of Halland.

Porcelain ware.

Our porcelain, or at least that intended for the table, has fared no better than our linen, in being gradually deprived of all its color, but a reaction has now set in in the other direc-

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tion. Matters had, however, gone so far that even in royal palaces hardly any other decoration than a monogram and a gold rim were allowed, and the fine quality of the material was the only consideration to which any importance was attached. To find satisfaction in the consciousness of the simple value of the material itself, if looked at in its true light, is really a piece of barbarism, even if we allow that, in the case of porcelain, the finer material is certainly more pleasant to the eye than the coarser.

Pure white china.

As if it were not enough to have done away with all decoration of porcelain, it was, after many and repeated attempts, also deprived of the bluish or greenish tinge which is its peculiar characteristic, and which Oriental porcelain still for the most part retains. Modern manufacturers have succeeded in producing a porcelain of a perfectly milky white, — as if in decorative art the absence of color was a more precious quality than its presence.

Of late years, however, as we have already pointed out, the evils of a total absence of color have again begun to be felt. People now recognize that white table-ware is in no sense decorative, that it is not relieved by a white cloth, and that a table set with it, so far from producing a festal effect, looks dreary and bare. With the reawakened pleasure in the better and more tasteful products of artistic industry, the desire for

General demand for richly decorated table-ware.

richly decorated table-ware has been roused to such an extent indeed, that porcelain no longer satisfies the eye, and both the material and its decoration have fallen into disrepute. Fashion — for it is fashion to a great extent, and nothing else — has again introduced those old faïences for the table which at one time had been entirely displaced by porcelain, and whose use had become restricted to those countries in which the manufacture and introduction of porcelain was beset with difficulties.

Faïence coming into fashion.

Until lately, certain decorative pieces only, destined to ornament the table and the sideboard, were of faïence, while the table-ware in actual use continued to be of porcelain; but within a few years ordinary plates and dishes of faïence have been



used in Paris, especially on breakfast-tables, and that in circles which claim to be the best informed in matters of art, not, as might have been expected, of fine quality, but decorated, like the so-called "peasant's faïence," with apparently crude, and, in fact, mannered and affectedly bad paintings. It lies in the nature of things that this can only be one of the passing whims of French fashion, as porcelain, even if we allow that it is in one sense artistically inferior to faïence, offers certain material and practical advantages, which will never allow it to be permanently displaced by so inferior a material as white glazed earthenware. On the contrary, the recognition of these very advantages by the makers of majolica induced them several centuries ago to divest it of its real character, by glazing it with a white glaze which, as far as possible, gave it the appearance of the new material then introduced by the Dutch and Portuguese from China and Japan. It was owing to its special qualities that European porcelain, after the secret of its manufacture had been discovered in Saxony and had thence spread over the countries of Europe, supplanted white glazed faïence wherever it became known. Nowadays we are again attempting, by the use of this same old faïence (which is nothing but an imitation of porcelain without its good qualities, and which, in the modern examples spoken of, is clumsy in form and crude in decoration), to bring porcelain, though superior to it in fineness, lightness, elegance, cleanliness, and solidity, again into disrepute. The attempt cannot succeed on account of its manifest absurdity.

It can, however, never supplant porcelain ware.

There is absolutely no reason for returning to the use of white glazed faïence, in places where the material at command permits the manufacture of porcelain, and custom sanctions its use. On the other hand, the imitation of old *colored* faïence, of majolica, and of Palissy and Hirschvogel earthenware (see Plates LIV. and LV., and Figs. 142, 143, and 144) is amply justified by the decorative effect produced by their strong, vigorous, and full coloring, — an effect unattainable in elegant and delicate porcelain, unless it is made hard and

Good qualities of faïence, majolica, etc., pointed out.

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What sort of table-ware is best suited to be of faïence.

dry in tone, or, in other words, unartistic. For fruit-dishes, flower-vases, centre-pieces, water-pitchers, and other objects intended merely for the decoration of the table, this kind of faïence can be used to great advantage, and its revival, with a free adaptation of old patterns, must be counted as a gain. It is not, however, the pictorial superiority, and the charm of color only, which recommends this sort of faïence for use, but the forms of those examples handed down to us from the best period of the Renaissance in the sixteenth century which likewise speak in its favor, as they cannot but react upon those of porcelain ware with an elevating influence of which they stand greatly in need.

Fig. 142.



Forms of porcelain table-ware.

The forms of porcelain ware to which we will first turn our attention are still influenced to a considerable degree by its Chinese origin, although this remark applies more to those of tea and coffee sets than to table-ware, properly speaking. Time, and especially that period of it which includes the transition through the Rococo and the pseudo-Greek art of the Empire, has indeed availed to rid our tea and coffee sets, at least in our own eyes, of the Baroque character peculiar to Chinese forms, but they nevertheless still retain the low, compressed, and thick-bodied forms, also characteristic of Chinese ware. It is as if the small, short-necked, thick-set, and squat forms of the Mongolian race were reflected in them, just as the nobler, taller, and slenderer physique of the Greek race seems to

Correspondence of physical structure and produced form.



VASE.

(Design by A Hirschvogel. Dated 1543.)

be reflected in their noble, slender, and self-supporting vases.

In spite of all this, the genuine Chinese forms surprise us, if not by their beauty, at least by their naïve, bold compo-

Fig. 143.



sition, and by their evident and unmistakable fitness for the purposes for which they were made. (Fig. 145.) While the European forms which sprang from their influence have lost the charm of freshness and originality belonging to their prototypes, they have retained nothing of them but their

Comparisons between Chinese originals and European imitations.

clumsy and thick-set shapes. As we find them nowadays, they in most cases greatly need to be ennobled in order to bring them into harmony with modern æsthetic requirements. The bizarre forms of Chinese porcelain were outdone in caprice by Rococo adaptations. The pseudo-antique style of the first French Empire remodelled them somewhat more boldly, but it did not dare to replace inherited forms by those of Greek origin. This mixture of Greek shapes with the originally Chinese forms of our cups, saucers, tea and coffee pots, seldom resulted satisfactorily. If we examine the tea-sets made at Sêvres during the reign of the first Napoleon, we detect a confessed weakness in the manifold attempts to transform large Greek urns, amphoras, and mixing vessels into small, handy cups. The double handles especially, which

Rococo and pseudo-Greek use of Chinese forms.

Tea-sets of Sêvres porcelain made during the first Empire.

Fig. 144.

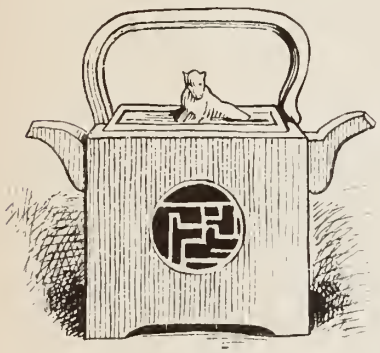




GERMAN JUG. FROM COLOGNE.
(Dated 1634.)

are sometimes attached near the top, sometimes near the bottom of the cup, are continual sources of trouble, and evidently will not allow themselves to be adapted to practical ends. For these reasons the directors of the porcelain manufactory at Vienna, which then occupied a very high and marked position, troubled themselves but little about adopting Greek forms for those in use, but were content to do away with their Chinese or Rococo character by the substitution of straight or angular for waving or bizarre lines, though this could not be done without stiffening the forms to a considerable degree. (See Figs. 146, 147, and 148.) To make up for this, they paid special attention to the beauty of the painting and the charm of the colored ornaments, and fashioned their porcelain vessels into shapes especially suitable for such decoration.

Fig. 145.



Viennese attempts to get rid of the Rococo character of porcelain forms.

These examples may teach us that we shall also be likely to fail if we endeavor to shape our tea and coffee sets after Greek models, and this whether we imitate them absolutely or modify them slightly. We can utilize the Greek feeling for form in these things only by holding fast to our typical shapes, which are both characteristic and rich in variety, and by endeavoring to give them beauty, grace of line, organic construction, and well-shaped handles; in short, to refine them without sacrificing their char-

Fig. 146.



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acter. Our modern porcelain manufacturers have already produced many specimens which are quite satisfactory in these respects.

Good results attained by modern manufacturers.

While our modern tea and coffee cups and pots show their Chinese-Japanese origin, the forms of our table-ware, properly

Fig. 147.



Rococo influence still affects table-ware.

speaking, as plainly show a Rococo influence. The reason for this is, that while there has been a regular development, organically connected with preceding periods, in the case of our plates and dishes, which coincides with the stylistic transmutations noticeable in the history of modern art, no such connection exists between our tea and coffee services and the past, as they first came into use with the introduction of tea and coffee. The forms of our table-ware may be traced back to the majolicas of the sixteenth century, although they underwent great and arbitrary changes during the period of the Rococo. The forms of majolica are still influenced by

Characteristics of majolica.

the potter's wheel, as indeed they should be, and circular forms and lines therefore prevail. (Fig. 149.) This very adherence to regularity was, however, opposed to Rococo taste, which took pleasure in the arbitrary and the capricious, and resolutely deviated from natural laws. Its devotees, therefore, assiduously avoided the unbroken circular line, lengthened out deep vessels, such as soup-dishes and sauce-boats, into an oval shape, and as if that were not enough, sometimes gave their sides an additional double curve inward, or bent them into absolutely irregular forms, twisting them inward or outward according to the dictates of caprice. (Fig. 150.) Not content with this, triangular, quadrangular, and pentagonal dishes, modelled by hand without any use of the potter's wheel, were invented in the Rococo period, as well as deep dishes shaped like cabbage leaves, and of all manner of arbitrary shapes besides, suggested by no law save that of caprice, and controlled by no technical or practical requirements. As practical reasons forbade the treatment of flat plates in an equally arbitrary manner, the changes made in them were limited to the broad rim. It assumed the form of a hexagon with curved lines, its flat surface was enlivened with plastic decorations in low relief, which of course to some extent limited the space reserved for decorative

Rococo horror of straight lines and simple curves.

Fig. 148.



Plate rims, how treated during the Rococo period.

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painting. The handles of the vessels were usually nothing more than bits of Rococo scroll-ornament, a flower or a fruit stuck on at random (Fig. 151), to whose delicate modelling the period under consideration attached great importance.

Fig. 149.



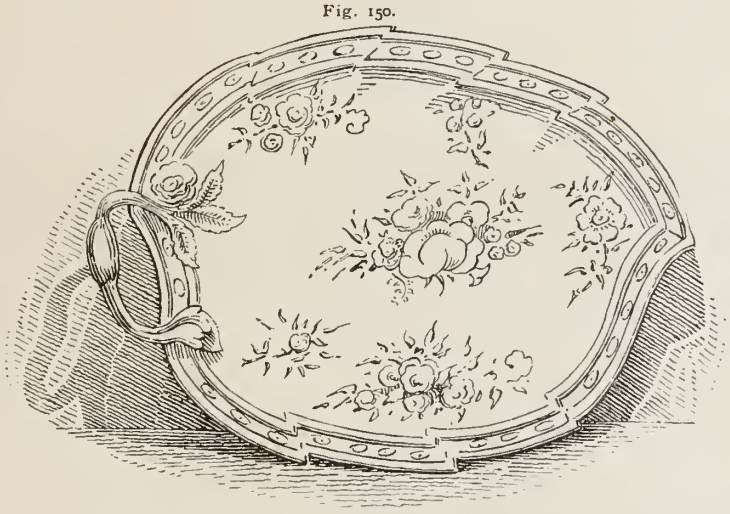
Modern forms of table-ware compared with those of the first Empire.

If we compare the forms of the table-ware of the present day with those which answer to this description, we shall find that they retain many of the features pointed out, without any trace of the pseudo-Greek influence of the Empire, which at one time endeavored to do away with all Rococo forms. These came in again in porcelain, as in all other branches of decorative art, with the Restoration, though weakened and emasculated, and consequently devoid of that charm which original and bold ideas always have, even if they are false in character. It is therefore easy to see in what direction reform is needed. We must, excepting where utility dictates long-

shaped forms, return to the round forms produced by the potter's wheel; we must give up the capriciously curved lines and relief ornaments which have survived the Rococo period, and, especially for plates, again adopt unbroken circular lines instead of curved, dentated, or scalloped rims. If by so doing we chance to lose a few forms, — which, however, are of no great importance, as they are but trivial, — we shall find compensation, on the other hand, in the greater measure of liberty gained for painted decoration, whose development has been

The course which we should pursue at the present time.

Fig. 150.



crippled in a variety of ways by the use of Rococo forms. It must certainly be admitted that in articles of this sort pictorial decoration is much more important than plastic, as practical considerations demand that all table-ware should be absolutely smooth and flat. While on the one hand we have removed the objections to the pictorial decoration of table-ware, we must on the other mark the limits within which it should be confined, as these are only too often ignored by painters on porcelain in our day. These limits concern not only the choice of subjects, but also the manner in which painting is employed with relation to the form and the use of the vessels.

Pictorial decoration more important than plastic in table-ware.

Limits within which pictorial decoration should be kept.

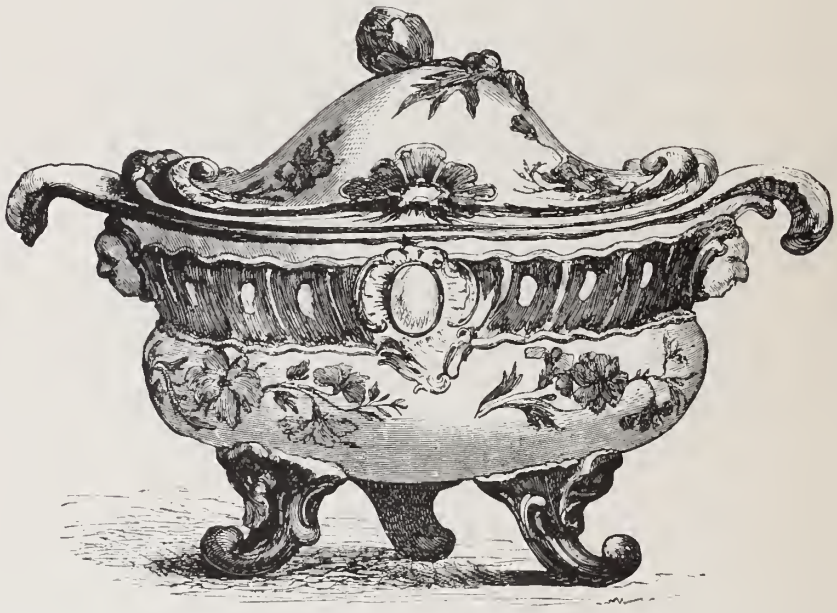
When we examine the majolicas of the sixteenth century

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from the first point of view, that is to say, with reference to their decorative subjects, it would at first almost seem as if they included the whole realm of painting. Close scrutiny, however, will soon convince us that no specially religious subjects, unless we class historical representations from the Old Testament as such, are to be found upon objects destined for secular use, either as table-ware, properly speaking, or as decorative pieces for "dressoirs" and the like. It is

Religious subjects not formerly used in the decoration of majolica ware intended for secular use.

Fig. 151.



clearly evident that this never-violated rule sprang from the feeling which forbade the desecration of things holy. We moderns seem to have lost this feeling, for since the best period of porcelain painting, towards the close of the last century, the flat surfaces of plates have been decorated with Madonnas after Raphael and Titian, or with other sacred personages, and with scenes of every description, and this without giving offence to any one. The most popular pictures of this class in public galleries are precisely those which are most frequently used for the decoration of our dishes and teapots. There can be, however, no question that the feeling which

Violation of this rule in modern times.

kept the old artists from such use of religious subjects was thoroughly well founded.

But there is still another point of view which leads us to limit, or at least to regulate figure-painting upon vessels for eating and drinking, in which we are bound to confess that old majolica has set us a bad example. Painting, which here simply plays the part of a decorative art, must be regulated by the construction and organization of the vessel or other object to be decorated; it must take these essentials into account, and must not hide or pervert them, but, on the contrary, rather emphasize and bring them out prominently. The various parts of the plates which should thus be considered and separated from each other are the rims and flat spaces in their centres, and the bodies, handles, covers, and feet of taller vessels. Upon majolicas, however, — and this is true even of pieces of the best kind, — one and the same subject, such as a mythological scene or a landscape, is frequently carried over all these parts without any regard to the consequences. Hence it happens that the figures appear bent and broken, badly foreshortened, or even maimed and crippled.

The pictorial decoration of such objects should be in harmony with their construction and intended use.

Our modern manufacturers are indeed somewhat more careful in this particular, but in other respects they imitate majolica, in arbitrarily covering every part of their cups and plates with paintings, without any consideration of the fact that they can only be seen piecemeal, and apparently with the idea that the deep central spaces of their plates, which indeed offer the most convenient field for pictorial decoration, are suited to receive representations of every kind. They take no heed of the fact that it may be the fate of some foam-born Aphrodite, floating upon the waves of the sea, to be buried under a good, solid piece of roast beef, or that a desirable sunset glow may be given to the glaciers of some Alpine scene by the application of red pudding-sauce. They forget that those parts of a plate which are destined to be put to profane uses are above all others least fitted for decoration of the higher order, since knives and forks con-

Vicious distribution of decoration.

Non-consideration of fitness of subject to use.

tinually work to its destruction, and the remnants of viands left upon it congeal into sightless incrustations. For another reason we feel obliged to object to the naturalistic treatment of the insides of fruit-dishes and plates with still-life-like representations of fruit, and this is that real fruit is placed upon painted fruit, and the natural object necessarily conflicts with its imitation. If the purpose be really to deceive, it would be better to substitute decoration in relief for painted decoration, or to mingle artificial with real fruit.

Naturalistic treatment of fruit subjects upon plates and dishes objected to.

In direct opposition to the modes of decoration described, the bottoms of plates and dishes which are intended for practical use should be covered with some delicate unimportant ornament, intended only to do away with the crudeness and bareness of the great white space, while the richer and more important decoration should be reserved for those parts which are always in sight, even when the plate or dish is in use.

The rim of a plate is the part best fitted for decoration.

The broad rim of a plate is consequently the part best fitted to receive the principal decoration. It follows from its form that this decoration must chiefly consist of ornaments proper, and that the use of figures must be confined within very moderate limits. It should, furthermore, be considered that, as porcelain is an elegant material, with a smooth and delicate surface, its ornamentation should therefore be graceful, delicate, and aerial, rather than clumsy, heavy, and coarse.

In what way all decorative requirements may best be attained.

If the decoration is carried out according to the rules here laid down, if heavy colors in broad masses and broad bands of gold are avoided, if the drawing is beautiful or perhaps even richly graceful, it will be found that all decorative requirements have been sufficiently fulfilled; for the vessel itself is tastefully and appropriately ornamented: it is effectively relieved against the white table-cloth, and as an object makes a valuable piece of colored decoration for the dining-table.

English mode of decorating porcelain commended.

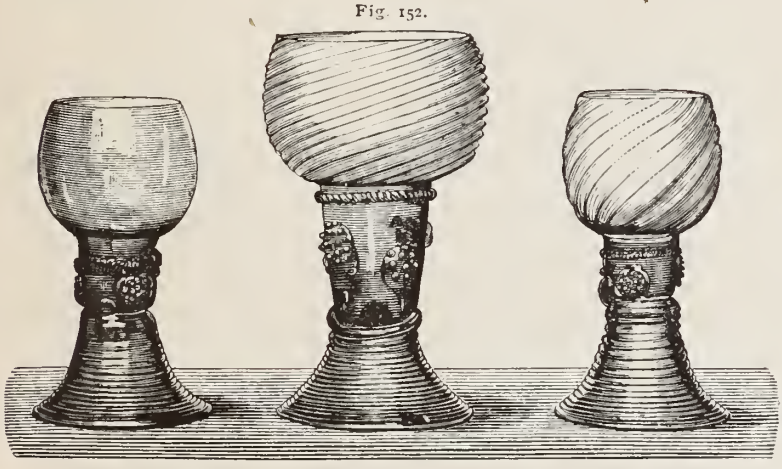
This character is again aimed at in the new system of decorating porcelain ware, which was first adopted in England. The method demands color, but color treated harmoniously and ornamentally.

Table-glass.

Matters relating to glass-ware for table use are in quite a different state. All color, or, to speak more correctly, all painting, as applied to glass, has long been given up, and, considering the nature of the material employed, there is, indeed, no necessity whatever for reviving its use. All the artificial glass which we use to-day is transparent, white, colorless crystal, for Bohemian colored glasses are either too inartistic and common to be taken into consideration, or else they are isolated show-pieces intended for other purposes than table use. Only one kind of colored table-glass is now in use, namely, the green glasses for Rhine-wine, known as "Roemer" (Fig. 152) in German, or Rummers in English, which it is

Character of glass in use at present time.

Fig. 152.



desirable to retain, partly because they are historico-artistic specialties, partly because their forms are good and original, whose loss in the sea of dreary uniformity which surrounds us would be a matter of regret. Their dark-green color pleads for them, as it produces a good effect on the table, although it robs the wine of its golden color.

Qualities of white and colored glass compared.

The chief advantages of colorless over colored glass are these, that it allows the color of the fluid which it holds to be seen fully and clearly, and that it brings out the sparkle of the wine, a merit which its votaries are perfectly justified in valuing highly. To these must be added the effect produced

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English cut glass, its decorative effect.

by the lively and ever-changing play of reflected lights in uncolored glass, which may be greatly enhanced by artificial cutting. This constitutes the difference between English and German or Austrian glass. The latter is of lighter weight, and reflects only colorless light, while English glass, when cut in prisms, disperses the rays of light so as to produce the colors of the rainbow, and if aided by artistic and carefully calculated cutting, heightens this play of lights to the full color-sparkle of the diamond. This is evidently a great decorative advantage, in the absence of other artistic qualities; for a table richly set with English cut glass, and flooded with its colored lights, must necessarily gain in its festive appearance.

Fig. 153.



The English have, in fact, based a real art principle upon this quality of their glass, but it has this disadvantage, that it is difficult to combine their mode of decoration with good and elegant forms, because the outlines are always broken up and jagged by the facets and incisions.

Good forms hardly possible in cut glass.

In our own (German or Austrian) glassware, the same obstacles in the way of an attempt to use good forms are noticeable, as the corners and edges and cut surfaces necessarily lead to stiffness. Thence come the straight-lined profiles of crystal table-ware hitherto in use, the stiff yet clumsy forms, the thick-

set shapes of the stems, and the square feet on which they rest, all of which are contrary to the nature of glass vessels.

Fig. 154.



This deficiency in form, which is still further increased in such objects by that want of feeling for it characteristic

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of the nineteenth century, having at last been recognized, finally led to the substitution of rounded forms for cut facets, and to lighter and richer outlines. Instead of that play of reflected light which was thus limited, a much more refined artistic element was prominently brought forward, namely, that of beautiful, graceful, and pleasing forms richly developed, and decorated with engraved or etched arabesques, foliage, or figures, after the manner of the real rock-crystal vessels of the sixteenth century. (Figs. 153 and 154.) This style, which originated in England, and was imitated in Austria, deserves to be generally adopted, as Bohemian glass, which does not show prismatic colors, and approaches nearer to rock-crystal than any other kind of glass, is especially suited to it. Utensils of this kind produced of late years, which are generally modelled after Renaissance, or perhaps even more frequently after Greek forms, belong to the most agreeable and happiest efforts of modern art-industry. (Figs. 155 and 156).

Glass decorated with engraved or etched designs.

Fig. 155.



Unsuccessful attempts to use gold in the decoration of glass

Instead of etching or engraving, ornamentation in gold has also been tried, but much less successfully. Gold demands an opaque ground, and consequently when applied to glass it produces a tame effect, which is still further increased by the lights and reflections of the material. The very prevalent modern fashion of decorating one side of a glass vessel with a coat-of-arms in color, sometimes on a raised ground, is also not to be recommended. It gives a front or principal side to the vessel, which is not in accordance with its nature, and destroys its symmetry and harmony by making the other three sides appear bare.



VENETIAN GLASS.

16th Century

Excellent forms of Venetian blown glass.

Still another means of reaching an artistic end has been tried by the Venetian glass-makers. Instead of using cut glass, they have moulded their exceedingly light, ductile blown glass into very graceful, elegant, and refined shapes, fashioned after Venetian models of the sixteenth century (see Plate LVI. and Figs. 157 and 158), often so classical in form

Fig. 156.



as to rival antique vessels in faultless beauty. No person of artistic feeling, who closely examines these delicate, well-shaped, and charming drinking-vessels, can fail to be delighted with them; but they are open to the one objection, that their decorative effect when placed on the table is almost or entirely null. They are so thin and transparent that they do not strike the eye sufficiently, and must be handled before their full beauty can be appreciated. For this reason the Venetians, whose admirable technical ability enables them to do

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Venetian use of color in glass decoration.

whatever they will with the material, have sometimes employed red, blue, or green glass, or have spun colored threads into white glass with a view of imparting a decorative effect. But color so used diminishes the elegant lightness of the material, and although it may be said of glasses so decorated that some of the most charming creations of the glass-maker's art are to be found among them, at the same time it cannot be denied that they also include some of the most artificial and bizarre

Fig. 157.



Fig. 158.



forms imaginable, and that on the whole they are rather fitted for the adornment of sideboards and cabinets than for actual use. Colored Bohemian glass might possibly be also made available for artistic table-ware, but the experiments so far made have not been successful enough to be of any value.

Colored Bohemian glass.

Taken all in all, it must, however, be acknowledged that the manufacturers of glass-ware for table use have made excellent progress in new and correct paths, and it is only to be hoped that the public may not be prevailed upon by some

novel and mistaken fashion to turn its back upon the road they are now following. There are still, however, a number of errors which must be pointed out.

Correct forms of the various kinds of drinking-glasses.

One of these seems to me to lie in the frequent want of comprehension of what the legitimate forms of the various classes of drinking-vessels are. It is not owing simply to a caprice that special forms, differing essentially from one another, have been devised, in the course of time, for water, beer, wine, and liquors, as, for instance, the high-stemmed wineglass, the low broad water-glass, the mug-shaped glass with a handle, or the more slender beer-glass with a low foot. The form of these vessels has not only been fixed by historical tradition, but by the greater or less quantity of fluid which they are intended to hold. The more valuable and nobler liquids demand a richer and more refined order of wineglass, which in the case of the champagne-glass tapers downwards to a point, and is flattened out at the top, so as to allow the bubbles to be seen as they rise to the surface. For beer, which has is substantial, but more vulgar and prosaic, and which never yet inspired a bard to sing its praises in truly poetical strains, a simpler, stronger, and more compact form has been chosen, which is, however, by no means devoid of character or beauty; while for water, as being both an insipid and unattractive beverage, the shape of the drinking-vessel which has been chosen is as simple and unpretending as possible, although not unsusceptible of receiving a certain degree of beauty. It is a great mistake, therefore, frequently committed by modern manufacturers, to ignore these distinctions, and to treat all sorts of drinking-vessels alike. Taking any one ground-form at random, they shape them all after it without making any other difference between them than that of size. Those who take the wineglass as a model do at least select the best and most refined form of glass, but even this loses its charm when considerably enlarged. The worst mistake, however, is made when, according to one of the latest and most highly lauded fashions, the goblet is chosen as a pattern for wine, beer, and even champagne glasses, with no other

Harmony between quality of form used for drinking-glasses, and the quality of the liquid which they are meant to hold.

Modern manufacturers err in using forms indiscriminately.

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change than that of lowering or heightening, widening or lengthening, its dimensions. If this fashion is persisted in, we shall end by taking tubs and pails as models for our drinking-vessels. This will, however, lead not only to the extreme of absurdity, but to the exclusion of art. Let us hope that the manufacturers of glass-ware, having started on the right path, will not allow themselves to be turned from it by such whims and caprices.

Decorative articles used upon tables.

If we now turn our attention to utensils used for the setting and decoration of our tables, we shall find that they are in a far less favorable position than our glass-ware. Let me refer to the wonderful silver vessels unearthed a few years ago at Hildesheim (see Figs. 29 and 30, pp. 25 and 26), and now widely known through innumerable copies; and also to the exquisite silver-ware of the Renaissance, such as salt-cellars and the like, by Benvenuto Cellini; dishes, goblets, and centre-pieces by Wenzel Jamnitzer; crystal vases of noble form mounted in gold, and enamelled; goblets for state-banquets, and objects owned by the guilds of the sixteenth century, of which many extant examples, once the ornament of the table, are now the pride of museums and private collections. (See Plate LVII. and Fig. 159.)

Fig. 159.



Modern silver-ware compared with that of the Renaissance.

If we compare the silver-ware of our own dining and tea tables with things such as these,



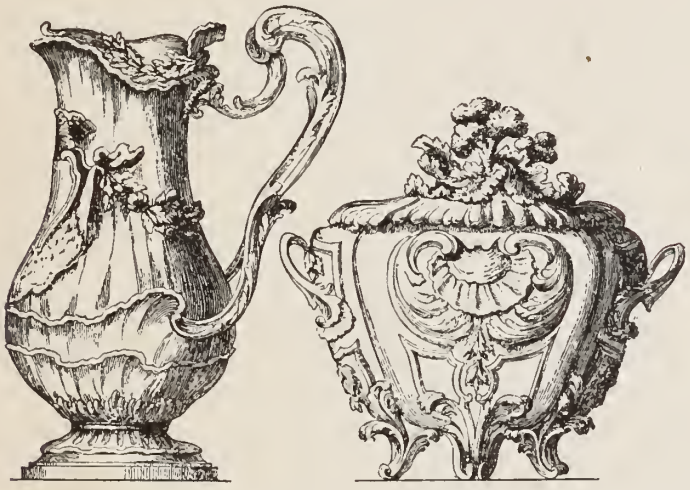
GOBLET.

(Design by Virgil Solis. 16th Century.)

do we find anything approaching them, anything inspired by genius of the same order? The leading goldsmith of one of our large capitals, the residence of a prince, declares that those who buy of him buy and pay for his wares according to the weight. As an offset to this there are many witnesses who assure us that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the value of the labor expended upon an object exceeded many times that of the metal of which it was made. In point of fact, our silver spoons and forks and our silver knife-handles are, as a rule, nothing but pieces of metal moulded into a

Art once ennobled material.

Fig. 160.



shape convenient for handling, and at the best decorated with a paltry bit of Rococo ornament. Our silver tea and coffee pots are, for the most part, poor imitations of Chinese porcelain forms for similar objects, which might be fittingly and beautifully developed, though they seldom are.

Only here and there do we meet with a happy thought, an indication of genuine art feeling in the mass of such objects. Our salt-cellars and sugar-bowls, still laboring under the tyranny of the Rococo, are twisted into arbitrarily curved forms, and loaded with finical, weak, and unintelligible repoussé ornaments. (Fig. 160.) And yet such Rococo forms are after all preferable to those generally given to objects of

Salt-cellars and sugar-bowls of the present day.

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a higher order, which, under the influence of an extravagant naturalism, are made in imitation of some flower, of a few leaves bent together, or even of a hollow animal.

Centre-pieces and their present naturalistic treatment.

Such naturalism governed, and still governs more especially, those costly utensils called centre-pieces. It is no wonder that they often perplex the artist, who is puzzled to define their real nature in his mind. He asks himself, What is the real nature of a centre-piece? What is its use, what its ground-form, and what the idea which is to guide me in designing it? We do not answer these questions, or, at least, do not answer them in a manner which would suggest the proper shape for such a table ornament, when we reply that its office is decorative. The vagueness and uncertainty thus implied has given rise to the oddest and most fantastic inventions imaginable, all of which were intended to aid in the decoration of the table. During the latter part of the Middle Ages all sorts of ingenious pieces of mechanism were contrived to serve as centre-pieces, such as castles with movable figures, sleeping princesses guarded by wild men, and trees with singing birds sitting on their branches. The Renaissance had a fancy for ships, or figures of men and animals, statuettes of horsemen worked in silver, which were at least intended for apparent or actual use as drinking-vessels. Then came the Rococo period, during which porcelain figures and groups, large and small, were placed on the table. Towards the end of the last century, with the revival of the taste for antiquity, these were in their turn replaced by small temples, or imitations of antique statues, which sometimes supported vases and dishes. And now, having abandoned these also, the want of a definite style and settled taste has left us at the mercy of caprice, and our freedom from restraint perplexes us.

What is the real office of a centre-piece?

Extravagant attempts to solve the problem.

Centre-pieces of the Rococo and succeeding periods.

Modern centre-pieces.

We find upon our dining-tables such objects, under the name of centre-pieces and intended to be so used, as flower and fruit dishes, vases and wine-coolers, fountains, temples, statues, girandolas, and a multiplicity of other things of little importance in themselves, serving no other end than that of pleas-

ing the eye, which they would quite as well do in any other place. As an example, we may mention a magnificent piece of silver-work now in the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry. This, the well-known "*upstalsboom* of East Friesland," originally presented as a wedding gift to the King of Hanover, is a realistic representation of an oak-tree, evidently intended to be used as a centre-piece. It is truly a marvel of skill and patient toil, and at the same time a marvel of misapplied art. Equally wonderful in this respect are the realistic trees, wrought in metal, which are occasionally seen in shop-windows and exhibitions, having their branches enlivened with birds, and the ground below them peopled with Hungarian shepherds or Croats busied in exercising their horses; the rocky landscapes filled with deer and hunters, and the representations of tropical nature, with palms under which Paul and Virginia play their parts like actors on the stage. To the same class belong pieces of metal-work like that which found so many admirers at the second World's Fair held at London. It represented a high terraced rock overgrown with vegetation, bearing on its summit a sort of temple in the Oriental style, built over a spring, to which several Arabs were leading their horses. The whole was executed in silver in the highest relief, and partly gilt. The celebrated table-ornaments made by Christofle for the city of Paris, and shown at the last French exhibition, were equally poor in conception. Their central and most important piece was supposed to represent the sea, contained in a shallow dish of colossal dimensions, and bearing on its waves the Parisian crest, a manned vessel surrounded by tritons, sea-horses, and other inhabitants of the watery deep. Around it, as upon the shore, stood candelabra. The conception can hardly be characterized as felicitous. These, and other works belonging to the same set, owed their inspiration, as well as their subjects, to the city government, by which they were ordered; but there was no connection whatever, either in idea or in form, with the table which they were intended to ornament.

Centre-piece presented to the King of Hanover.

Other centre-pieces of an equally absurd character.

Table-ornaments made for the city of Paris by Christofle.

And yet it seems to me that this relation between the

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The relation between the centre-piece and the table should be always kept in mind.

centre-piece and the table is precisely the one point not to be lost sight of, if we are ever again to be freed from the dominion of caprice. The leading idea should be clearly defined. Since everything on the table must serve a purpose, and since the table is not the place for high or historical art, the centre-piece should likewise have a use and serve a purpose, either apparently or actually. According to an old and celebrated book, the "Essence of the Art of Cooking," the centre-piece is really intended to take the place of the soup-tureen, which usually occupies the middle of the dinner-table. This only signifies, however, that the table is incomplete without an artistic centre of some sort. Occasionally a handsome chandelier or a costly lamp may be sufficient, but in the majority of cases floral decoration will be found preferable, and the centre-piece then offers itself as a receptacle for the flowers. It is, however, by no means necessary to give it the shape of a vase; on the contrary, it is desirable, for practical reasons, to deviate from this usual shape, as it is apt to inconvenience the guests by preventing them from seeing each other. Low dishes and basket-like vessels, or, if height is desired, vessels with slender stems rising from a base, so that their most important portions may be raised above the level of the eye, will be found to answer the purpose far better. We do not, however, wish in any way to fetter the imagination of the artist by these considerations. Figures and other artistic motives, conceived in a somewhat monumental spirit, may very well be introduced, even if they are in themselves so important as to make the floral decoration appear subordinate. These conceptions, however, should not be extraneous, or spring from ideas belonging to an entirely different sphere of thought, but rather closely associated with the table and all that belongs to it, its pleasures and its decoration.

The centre-piece should be made a receptacle for flowers.

Liberty in conception allowed to the artist within due limits.

These limits defined.

Even within these limits the artist will find it necessary to submit to certain restrictions. Not only must the composition of the centre-piece be light and graceful, as heaviness and clumsiness are qualities undesirable in objects for table

use, but it should be designed with due reference to the one point already alluded to, namely, that the guests should not be prevented from looking into each other's faces by any intervening object. Centre-pieces, or whatever else may occupy their places, should not obstruct the view with broad masses, so as to compel the guests to look round them when they wish to speak to each other. Such masses should therefore be placed either below the level of the eye, or above it, on slender supports. The latter plan, if adopted, demands careful treatment, as it also is liable to give a heavy and overcrowded look to the table. A certain lady of high rank may, in view of these facts, be said to have been guided by a perfectly correct feeling, when, instead of placing flowers upon the table in high vases, she caused it to be decorated with garlands.

Centre-pieces should never be so made as to prevent intercourse between the guests.

To an inventive genius, endowed with decorative talent, the hint just given will certainly suggest a variety of ways for devising thoroughly original and charming decorations for the dinner-table. We must not, however, enter into a detailed consideration of this subject, as it belongs more properly to the butler and the seneschal than to the artist. Our only desire was to show that even to an æsthetic mind the festive decoration of a dinner-table offers a wide and fruitful field of activity, although, as compared with the more substantial pleasures of the board, it is generally thought to be of little consequence. We also desired to remark that the table-ware produced by the industrial arts of our day, instead of being faultless, is frequently open to grave objections, and that a little common-sense, applied to things which are generally supposed to be outside the pale of reason, will suffice to indicate the direction which our manufacturers ought to take. Finally, we wished to draw attention to the fact that here as well as elsewhere the conditions of beauty and the proper limits of artistic conception must be sought in the peculiarities and intended uses of the objects themselves; though, on the other hand, for the very reason that they are to be made practically useful, they can never be complete in themselves,

Purpose of the remarks and suggestions given in the text.

Defects of modern table-ware.

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and must never be considered otherwise than with reference to their effect, and in connection with all the other objects which contribute to the decoration of a well-furnished table. Only by so considering the dining-table as a whole will it be possible to raise it, even in the eyes of a person of æsthetic culture, to the dignity of a real, although transient work of art, and to make it a means of adding intellectual to material enjoyment. Thus the prosaic object to which it is devoted will be ennobled and idealized.

The dinner-table should be considered as a whole



CHAPTER X.

WOMAN'S ÆSTHETIC MISSION.

THE subject of Household Art cannot be said to have been adequately treated, even after the most exhaustive discussion of every decorative and useful object in the house, so long as we have not considered woman, its mistress, in her relation to it, and her artistic work. We must therefore endeavor to discover the aims as well as the limits, of her æsthetic mission.

The mistress of the house and her æsthetic mission.

Here some student of history may perhaps doubtingly ask, How can woman's æsthetic mission be discussed? The whole history of art clearly disproves it, since everything really great and beautiful which we know about, and everything which exists to charm our astonished gaze, is the creation of the stronger and not of the fairer portions of mankind. The temples of the Egyptians and Greeks, the gigantic domes of the Middle Ages, the sculptures of the Parthenon, the frescos of the Vatican, and all the other monuments which, century after century, have been objects of pilgrimage to men of culture "whose souls are ever searching for the land of beauty," sprang from the masculine brain, and were executed by man's hard hand.

What history teaches us about it.

It is true that history also records the names of women who have actively labored in the wide domain of the arts of design, such as Sabina von Steinbach, Margaret van Eyck, Elizabetta Sirani, Angelica Kaufmann, Rachel Ruysch, and

Women illustrious in art.

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many women of our own time whose names might be deservedly added to the list. But how small and limited is the field which they cultivated, how insignificant is their number as compared to that of the men who have worked in the same sphere of human activity, and how far in the background must we place their achievements, if we take into consideration grandeur of style, depth and breadth of conception, elevation and boldness of idea, exuberance of life, energy and vehemence of passion!

Woman's field of activity in art extremely limited.

If we look over the whole broad field of art, we shall find that the hand of woman has labored with success in but a very narrow portion of it. Instinctively true to her nature, she has preferred the minute and charming, the delicate and amiable, the tender and graceful, and has cultivated it diligently, lovingly, patiently, with talent and skill even, but yet in a humble style. On her own ground woman may compete for the prize with the hope of winning it, though, when we acknowledge that "she is great in her specialty," we must perforce add, "but her specialty is small."

Exceptions to the general rule pointed out. The Princess Mary of Würtemberg.

As a matter of course, there are apparent as well as actual exceptions to this rule, although they are few in number. There are female sculptors, for instance, such as the Duchess Mary of Würtemberg, the daughter of Louis Philippe, who did not shrink from handling the hammer and the chisel with her delicate hands, or from rough work in clay and stone. Nevertheless, when we look at her statue of the heroic Maid of Orleans, whom she represented as a pious visionary resigned to the will of God, though hardly heroic, we must own that after all the exception only proves the rule. While in this case the conception of the figure is superior to the execution, there are female painters, on the other hand, who work out their conceptions boldly and powerfully, with a broad touch, and, to use artistic language, with the hand of a "virtuoso." While this expression, which is applicable only to man's work, implies (in woman) an overstepping of the bounds of nature, experience has also taught us that such female artists have very generally won their right to this title at the expense of

Female sculptors and painters.

specially feminine qualities in their domestic and social relations.

These remarks, however, are not at all intended to convey the idea that nature has forever shut out the intellect and the hand of woman from the field of high art; though, if we rely upon historical grounds, or look around us, we cannot avoid this conclusion. We must accept the fact that hitherto woman has been obliged to yield the laurels of high art to the hand of a competitor stronger than herself, and has as yet given no evidence of her capability of winning them. Let her not, however, despair of success in the future, and meanwhile let her look elsewhere for consolation.

"High art," so called, does not include the whole of art, or every species of beauty.

In those branches of art, namely, which we generally call "high art," although art is in reality one and indivisible, the whole realm of art or of beauty is not comprised. It is undoubtedly in them that the finest flower of culture and of all intellectual effort is to be found, and it is for this reason that we include them under the head of "high art." Highly, however, as we may value the forms of art here referred to, their fruit is within the reach of a comparatively small number, for few are the fortunate mortals upon whom the joys which they bestow are abundantly showered. Shall the gates of the kingdom of beauty be therefore closed to the countless myriads of men who cannot visit museums and collections, and to whom all possibility of coming under the influences of art is denied? Shall the mass of mankind have no part whatever in the blessings which are derived from the contemplation of works of art, and from commerce with the beautiful? By no means! The kingdom of beauty, if we admit that it is to be attained step by step, may perhaps be said to culminate in high art, but it certainly is not entered through it.

Are the few only to enjoy the influences of art?

The common ground where beauty and utility meet is open to all.

Below high art, if we must so call it, or, more correctly speaking, side by side with it, there is still a wide-spread domain which is governed by beauty, and in which the beautiful and the useful are united. It is sometimes called the realm of taste, although, in the present unfortunate condition of things, it would be more appropriate to call it the realm of

Art in the house pre-eminently represented by the industrial arts.

want of taste. This may also be the reason why it has hitherto been despised, although it is really almost impossible to overvalue it on account of its far-reaching importance. Occasionally these branches of art are also called the lesser or industrial arts, and with reason if they are considered only in regard to their minor importance and from the artisan's

Fig. 161.



point of view; but to us they pre-eminently represent "Art in the House." It is art that helps to beautify life through the multiplicity of small, lovely, and charming objects with which, in our ceaseless yearning for beauty (often erring as we do in the means adopted to reach it, though never swerving from our aim), we are continually striving to surround ourselves; it is art which decorates our walls and our domes-

tic utensils, brings our whole dwelling into harmony, and fills it with an atmosphere of beauty and an impression of comfort charming alike to the eye and to the heart.

Household art the peculiar province of woman.

This then is the province which I would assign to woman for the working out of her mission as a promoter of the beautiful, without, however, implying that she must necessarily make all household ornaments with her own hands, since that is impossible. It is not necessary that she should be an artist herself in these things, or even take part in producing them; but wherever her hand is not actively engaged, her taste, her judgment, her wisdom in selection, may make themselves felt, and thus, whether she be herself a producer, or confine herself to the task of examination and selection, she will have the artistic side of her house under her control.

Is man to take no part in woman's special work?

But — I hear some one object — is her husband to have no voice in the matter? Is it not rather his duty to assist her in deliberating and deciding? I admit this in a certain sense. I do not intend in principle to relieve the husband of his part of the responsibility, although I cannot say that I think much of what Hercules accomplished with the distaff. We sometimes see work similar to his done in our own day, though the modern representative of Hercules resembles him in no other particular. He stands in a very different position, and we must take things as they are.

Man's occupations absorb his thoughts and time.

In the present state of things, the husband's occupations necessitate his absence from the house, and call him far away from it. During the day his mind is absorbed in many good and useful ways, in making and acquiring money for instance, and even after the hours of business have passed, they occupy his thoughts. When he returns home tired with work and in need of recreation, he longs for quiet enjoyment, and takes pleasure in the home which his wife has made comfortable and attractive, and has beautified with works of art. His manner of life is not favorable to the development of his æsthetic perceptions. Taste in woman may, on the contrary, be said to be natural to her sex. She is the mistress of the house in which she rules, and which she orders like a queen.

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Should it not then be specially her business to add *beauty* to the *order* which she has created?

Woman's work is not trivial, though expended on minor matters.

Why, indeed, should this her occupation appear trivial and unimportant, because it is mostly concerned with small things? Think for a moment how important the development of a love of beauty in the human mind has been considered to be throughout the whole course of history, and how important it is thought to be as a part of modern culture! Art, it is said, refines the manners, diverts our thoughts from low and vulgar things, consoles us for the many troubles and discomforts of material existence, and raises us above them into a higher spiritual sphere: it humanizes us, and idealizes our life. All this it does both by awakening the æsthetic sense in us by increasing our pleasure in beauty and our capacity for its enjoyment, and by continually providing new food and new objects of delight to satisfy the longings which it has awakened. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that we can only be educated by works of high art. They do indeed specially promote the appreciation of beauty, but this can also be developed by small and comparatively unimportant objects, which are, after all, the only ones accessible to the vast majority of mankind, no less than by works of art of a monumental character.

The services of art to, and the results of its influence upon, mankind.

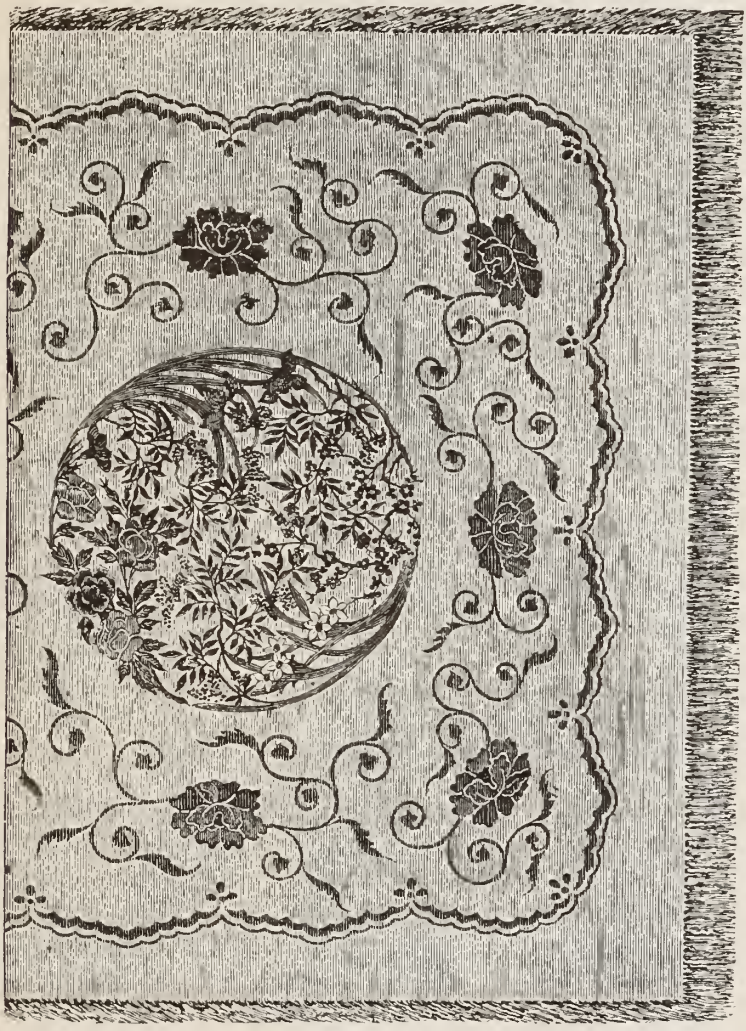
Importance of the industrial arts as connected with daily life.

We should therefore do wrong to despise that phase of beauty which they represent, or to undervalue and neglect its importance, and all the more because the objects alluded to are precisely those among which we grow up, from which, in early childhood, we receive our first impressions, and by which we are first impelled to cultivate the æsthetic sense. The child's first glance rests upon them, and his eyes become accustomed to them; he uses those objects which surround him, and which form part of his experiences, as standards in judging his new and strange impressions. It lies, however, in their very nature, that, being principally intended to please and attract by their outward beauty, these objects appeal much more readily to the growing mind of the child, and therefore aid him much more in his first steps toward æsthetic

Influence of surrounding objects upon children.

culture, than the great works of high art, for whose full enjoyment and comprehension a ripe understanding is above all things necessary. The importance of these objects of beauty is, however, not limited to childhood. For many years they

Fig. 162.



are often the only ones which excite the æsthetic faculty in us, and as they are the sole representatives of art in the house, their influence is perpetual. They go with us through life, and we are often obliged to rest content with them as our only source of æsthetic nourishment.

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Taste generally said to be intuitive, but even where it is so, training cannot be dispensed with.

It has been said with truth that taste, or, in other words, the sense of beauty, that is, the faculty of distinguishing the beautiful from the ugly, is intuitive, and it is customary to attribute it more especially to the female sex. Allowing this to be correct, an intuitive feeling for the beautiful is after all a talent, or, in other words, a natural capacity, which must be trained and educated under the influence of exterior influences. Furthermore, if correct taste is really oftener to be found in women than in men, the phenomenon can only be explained by the fact that in the ordinary course of life women are obliged to exercise their minds upon questions of taste much more frequently than men. Hence it seems evident that even in them taste is the result of practice and of training, rather than a natural gift.

Reasons why taste is more general in woman than in man.

If then taste, or rather the capacity of discerning and enjoying the beautiful, is a result of practice and training, and if it is coupled with an educational capacity, we must perforce acknowledge the extraordinary value of household art (which, being of a humble kind, is so often despised or looked upon as mere child's play), and consequently recognize the importance of woman's mission in the work of civilization. The wife, while promoting the love of the beautiful through household art, and thus educating her own taste and that of her family and her surroundings, becomes an active co-laborer in the education of the nation, and aids in general culture.

The task allotted to woman is more important nowadays than it was in former times.

In our own day the task allotted to her is of even greater importance than in past times, when a correct feeling for art was a common inheritance and permeated society. All competent judges now unanimously agree that those branches of artistic activity in connection with which the word "taste" is usually employed are in a most unsatisfactory state, and are only beginning to raise themselves by degrees from the decadent state into which they have fallen. Are artists and manufacturers, who have lost all feeling for and all comprehension of what is really beautiful or ugly, accountable for this state of things, or is the public, whose corrupt taste compels the artist to produce tasteless works, to be blamed for it?

Are artists and manufacturers, or is the public, responsible for the present state of things?



EMBROIDERED TABLECOVER. GERMAN.

16th Century.

We shall not enter upon further discussion of such questions, as the attempt to explain the present fallen condition of these branches of art would carry us too far from our proper subject. We may, however, confidently assume that both are at fault, and we shall therefore, I think, do the public also a service if we especially consider the present condition of domestic needlework. For my own peace of mind, I must preface my remarks by the words "present company always excepted," and ask my lady readers to believe that they are intended to be applied to all of them.

We may consider it as settled that it is woman's duty at the present time, not only to bring beauty into the house, but also to help to create it, and generally to assist in the revival of all the arts, by the education of taste and the cultivation of a feeling for the beautiful in herself and in all those who surround her. There are two special fields of activity in which she may profitably work toward this end, namely, domestic needlework and house decoration, and to these I desire to invite attention. I might add a third, namely, the toilet in its entirety, for who will deny that care, attention, and taste are as necessary in all matters appertaining to it as to anything else; for if a lady, while cultivating other branches of attraction, were to neglect this, she would be herself out of harmony with her artistic surroundings, and, by the contrast presented to them in her own person, would destroy the picture which she had herself created. In point of fact she should be herself the noblest ornament of her ornamented dwelling.

Domestic needlework, house decoration, and the toilet.

The mistress of the house should be its fairest ornament.

How can I question, however, that in most ladies' houses all things are not ordered for the best, or suggest that everything in them is not so perfect that even the severest and most critical eyes can find no room for cavil. How can I doubt that ladies, consciously or unconsciously, are not thoroughly penetrated with the sentiment which inspired Rückert's words, —

> "When the rose adorns herself,
> She adorns the garden."

I am unfortunately unable to accord an equal measure of unreserved praise to domestic needlework, of which I shall

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at present mention only the most artistic, namely, embroidery, as time is wanting to discuss all its other endless varieties.

In the elucidation of the laws governing this branch of needlework, we shall, however, learn many lessons which may also be applied to the remaining branches. When looking at embroideries, we often cannot help observing that they show a disregard of the simplest laws of propriety, and that an immense amount of time, patience, trouble, and most painstaking diligence have been wasted in reaching a paltry and sometimes even pitiable result. Having often observed a total ignorance of the simplest and most self-evident laws of decoration in work of this kind, together with an absence of reflection and a want of clear comprehension of means and ends, I feel that time will not be thrown away in considering it somewhat more carefully, and in the light of reason. The reform of taste by woman's agency can and should begin with embroidery, and the first and most imperative duty of her mission as a promoter of the beautiful is to improve it.

Embroidery, and the laws which govern it.

If I were looking for a collection of examples of bad work, I should only have to enter one of the shops where embroideries are sold, or to remember such an exhibition of woman's artistic work as is annually held at the "Volksgarten" in Vienna, or to look over a few numbers of those richly illustrated journals which, together with prints of the fashions, also contain many patterns for domestic needlework. It would be unnecessary to consider such flagrant examples of misdirected ingenuity as the hollowing out of a statue of Venus with the intention of using it as a travelling-trunk or a violin-box, or as those which show us how an embroidered butterfly or a beetle or a slipper may be transformed into a watch-case. Good examples, which have only lately begun to appear, are still few and far between, and are for the most part swamped in the mass of failures and absurdities. It is not my intention, however, to catalogue them. I only need to cite a few examples from whose peculiar errors some valuable lessons may be learnt.

Flagrant instances of misapplication of work.

I recollect hearing one of my friends, an artist, say that a

lady once told him that she was making an embroidered portrait as a Christmas present for her husband. I cannot remember whether it was his likeness or hers, but at all events it was to be used to cover the seat of a chair. On his asking her whether she thought this a proper place for a portrait, she

Fig. 163.



recognized her error, and immediately sought a more fitting place for it. This shows that if the lady had not, like most people, been unaccustomed to reflect upon such matters, and had paused to think for an instant, she would never have fallen into so gross an error.

CHAP. X.

The fitness of an object for a given place must be determined by æsthetic considerations as well as by those of propriety.

When we have once perceived that every object is not suited to every place, and that the proper place for any object must be determined by æsthetic considerations as well as by those of propriety, we shall be less likely to commit mistakes, even in cases where the contradiction is less glaring than in the above instance. Pursuing the same train of thought, we would now ask whether it is any less improper to lean against a portrait than to sit upon it. Since a portrait is unquestionably intended to be seen, and to remind us of the person whom it represents, we have no business to cover it up at all. How we do so is immaterial.

The lesson which we may learn from this example may be doubly profitable. What is true of the chair is also true of many other objects, for it is not the portrait only which may be a stumbling-block of offence in cases of this kind. The art of the Baroque and Rococo period has bequeathed to us a fashion still in vogue, against which we feel obliged to protest. The manufacturers of Gobelin tapestries, who undertook to do with the loom what painters do with the brush, decorated chairs and sofas with all sorts of picture-subjects, treating their backs and seats as well-framed panels suitable for historical, allegorical, and genre subjects, and occasionally also for landscapes. This fashion was followed in embroidery, and has not yet been abandoned, though these subjects are as little fitted to such a purpose as portraits. They are objects of art which should be judged on their own merits, and when they are turned to common uses are certainly not intended to be covered up.

Backs and seats of chairs and sofas covered with pictorial subjects in Gobelin tapestry.

Improper use of pictorial subjects in embroidery.

Modern embroiderers commit the same error when they apply such subjects to sofa-cushions, travelling-bags, footstools, head-rests, and the like. We hang pictures upon the wall with the express intention of guarding them from the touch. But in the cases named, we produce pictures with the intention of leaning our backs against them, of resting our heads upon them, and of trampling them underfoot. Do we think that we shall sit more comfortably with rocky landscapes at our backs, or that we shall sleep more soundly if we rest our

heads upon loving couples holding sweet converse together, or that our feet will be the warmer if they repose upon embroidered pug-dogs?

These last specimens offer examples of still another mistake, which we may as well notice before going further. The subjects have not only been ill chosen, but they have been put in the wrong places. The principal decoration of a footstool ought not to occupy the place intended for the feet, where it will inevitably be soiled and rubbed off, but it should rather be put around the four sides, where the feet will not come in contact with it. If the upper surface is to be ornamented at all, the decorative pattern should be subdued, unobtrusive, purely conventional. Embroidered lamp-mats exhibit the same false treatment, for their chief ornament, a bouquet of flowers or whatever else it may be, is generally placed in the round central space. As this space is, however, invariably occupied by the lamp itself, the beautiful work put upon it can produce no effect whatsoever, and both the pains taken and the art expended are thrown away. Here also ornament should be concentrated upon the surrounding border, which always remains visible. If we keep these examples and the lessons which they teach in our minds, they will guide us aright in many similar cases. As something yet remains to be said about embroidered figures and pictures, we must return to them for a moment. If we call recent exhibitions to mind, we shall remember to have seen many large pieces of embroidery, representing figure-subjects stretched on frames in such a manner as to show that they were not intended for any practical use, but as independent works of art, like pictures. Their aim, their purpose, the only excuse indeed for their existence, is the same as that of the pictures which they aspire to imitate, namely, beauty. If we regard them from this point of view, and examine the blending of the colors, the flow of the lines, the beauty of the faces, the expression of character, and whatever else would be apt to invite criticism in a painting, do we find anything in them calculated to give us the slightest satisfaction? Can these colors, however beautiful

How footstools and lamp-mats should be ornamented.

Large pieces of embroidery lately exhibited.

Regarded as pictures, such embroideries are altogether unsatisfactory.

CHAP. X.

in themselves, ever be blended together, separated as they are by hard straight lines? Can these outlines be graceful, elegant, and flowing, worked as they are in cross-stitch by the combination of rows of small rectangular points? Is it in any way possible, with such limited means at command, to give beauty of form to the heads, or to express such emotions as pleasure, sorrow, love, hate, anger, etc., and when this is attempted can the result be other than the most complete caricature?

Inserted heads.

For these reasons it often happens that the artist, finding it impossible to embroider the heads, gives up the attempt in despair, and cutting them out of the lithograph before her, sews them into her work. This, however, only makes bad worse. Lithographs are not, in themselves, considered to be of much artistic value, so that the insertion thus made is worthless. Furthermore, the materials combined disagree with each other, the one being soft, pliable, and yet firm, the other fragile in the highest degree, easily torn, and sure to be destroyed by cleaning. Finally, the artist, by adopting this expedient, makes public display of her own artistic incompetency. If figures and heads are to be represented, — and we do not by any means intend to say that the art of embroidery is unable to deal with them, — they should also be worked with the needle, but in a stitch which will produce satisfactory results. Our ordinary cross-stitch and point-work are absolutely unfitted for the purpose, and bead-work is, if possible, still worse.

Artistic peculiarities of various kinds of embroidery now in vogue.

What are the artistic peculiarities of the various kinds of embroidery now generally practised by amateurs, so called, as I beg to assure my readers, to distinguish those who work for their own pleasure from professional needlewomen? Small squares are combined, mosaic-fashion, to form straight lines and angles. However fine the work, however small the squares, the principle is still the same. Any design, therefore, which is not made up of straight lines, can never be satisfactorily executed in this way, and any pattern containing curved instead of broken lines is unsuitable, and its use is a blunder. It follows that all representations of figures and landscapes



INDIAN EMBROIDERY.

are inadmissible, and that only designs composed of straight lines, on a geometric basis, such as the meander or Greek fret, are allowable. Anything else is objectionable, unless in cases where the work is destined to be seen at a sufficient distance to make the zigzag lines appear continuous. Even naturalistic representations of flowers, although most frequently chosen as subjects, are unfit to be executed in embroidery of this kind, as Nature nowhere makes use of straight lines or of continually recurring zigzags.

Designs based on geometrical figures.

The range of ornament applicable to embroidered work of this kind is therefore extremely limited, but it is still of sufficient importance to make it worth while not to abandon it altogether, more especially as it has this advantage, that any woman of moderately educated taste and a slight measure of inventive genius can make her own designs, and thus emancipate herself from current patterns and models, which are bad as a rule. The purpose of this ornamentation, as indeed of all decoration, is beauty of outward appearance, although this is but seldom reached by such simple means. The object is to produce regularly distributed, beautiful, and harmonious combinations of color, quiet or rich in effect, as the case may be, and this is not beyond the reach of an amateur of practised and cultivated taste.

Range of ornament extremely limited.

The object aimed at is not beyond the reach of a cultivated amateur.

If we desire to pass beyond this stage of decorative composition, and represent freely drawn ornaments, natural or conventionalized flowers, or figure-subjects and the like, we must give up amateur methods, and take to those of a more artistic character. In the fifteenth century, when embroidery was a real art, and almost a rival of painting, the methods now generally adopted were hardly known. They first became popular when the decline of embroidery had set in. The flat stitch was formerly exclusively used for the representation of faces and hands, and this is without doubt the only correct method, as it allows of free and artistic work because the threads can be laid so as to follow the drawing. It gives the workman as complete control of his needle as the artist has of his brush. Only when thus treated can embroidery be raised to the rank

Modern methods were unknown at the time when embroidery was really a fine art.

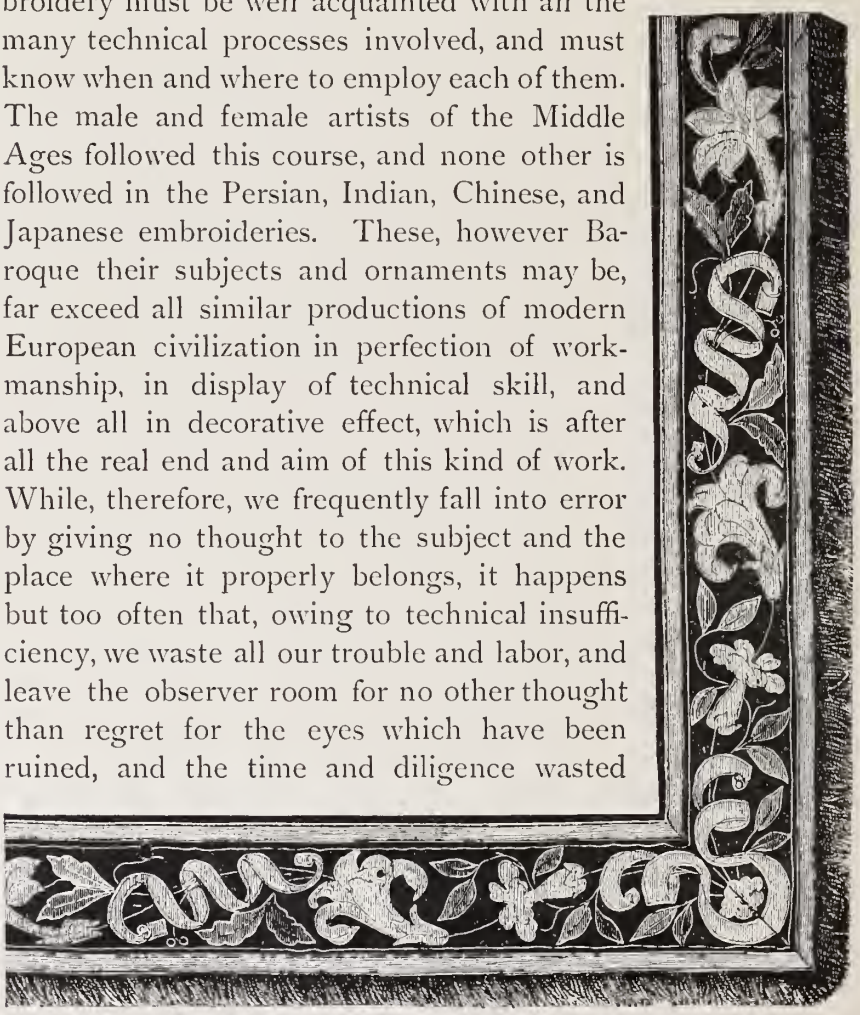
CHAP. X.

of needle-painting, and render even biblical subjects in an acceptable manner. In the subordinate parts, such as large flat spaces and groundwork, other methods, which produce a more even surface, may, however, be used, and were indeed used by the embroiderers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This is more especially necessary when threads of gold, which amateurs do not at all know how to manage, although they are exceedingly rich in decorative effect, are employed. In general, it may be said that a lady who desires to solve the higher and more difficult problems in the art of embroidery must be well acquainted with all the many technical processes involved, and must know when and where to employ each of them. The male and female artists of the Middle Ages followed this course, and none other is followed in the Persian, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese embroideries. These, however Baroque their subjects and ornaments may be, far exceed all similar productions of modern European civilization in perfection of workmanship, in display of technical skill, and above all in decorative effect, which is after all the real end and aim of this kind of work. While, therefore, we frequently fall into error by giving no thought to the subject and the place where it properly belongs, it happens but too often that, owing to technical insufficiency, we waste all our trouble and labor, and leave the observer room for no other thought than regret for the eyes which have been ruined, and the time and diligence wasted

Threads of gold introduced with happy effect.

Labor often wasted for want of technical knowledge.

Fig. 164.



Further examples of misapplied skill.

which might have been more worthily bestowed. Besides the mistakes made in selection, and the insufficiency of technical methods shown in execution, we meet with other errors and perversions of skill which can also be attributed only to thoughtlessness. Of these I shall again take an actual example as an illustration, which is by no means isolated, but rather a type of a whole class.

This example is an imitation of a well-known engraving, worked upon white silk in the finest black silk thread. The delicacy of workmanship, the drawing, the shading, and the modelling are all exquisite, although the black drawing on the silk somewhat heightens the effect of the embroidery. I do not, however, intend to find fault with it on this score, but to confine myself to the objection that the aim and the whole artistic tendency of the work are false.

What task did the artist set herself? Evidently to copy an engraving. Her utmost possibility was consequently to equal the engraving in beauty. Granting that she has done so, what was the use of employing such an unspeakable amount of diligence and labor, and expending so much skill upon a single copy, while the original print could be multiplied from the copperplate in untold numbers, easily, cheaply, and in the majority of cases even better, and upon any kind of plain silk if that were desired? As far as the beauty of any representation is concerned, the technical process employed is valuable only as a means, and the knowledge that the work has been done with the needle adds nothing whatever to its artistic value. Technical processes have an independent value of their own, and their employment is justified in so far only as they offer peculiar advantages, and enable us to do something which cannot be done as well, or in a more practical shape, by other processes.

Technical processes are valuable only as means to an end.

Now embroidery does offer such advantages. It is painting with the needle, and its special element is color, — another consideration which was entirely overlooked by the person who made the above-mentioned copy of an engraving in black and white. Although it is true that embroidery cannot pre-

Color is the special element of embroidery.

CHAP. X.

The proper domain of embroidery, or painting with the needle.

tend to rival painting in the height of its aims, it still has its peculiar excellences, which are derived from beauty of material, power and depth of color, and the brilliant gloss of silk. Its special quality is that, being itself pliable, it can apply painting to pliable objects. That is its proper domain, into which painting cannot and should not enter, and which it shares with weaving only. Embroidery may therefore be very well content to leave picture-making to painting.

It is not a free and independent, but more properly a decorative art.

From all this it follows that embroidery is not really a free and independent, but rather a decorative art. It ornaments and decorates objects which are intended for practical use, and adds to them the element of beauty. The artist must constantly remember that what she represents, what she works with her needle, is not the really important matter, so much as the giving of the most suitable decoration possible to the object for which her work is undertaken. Her choice is therefore not untrammelled, but fettered by that object. She must ask herself, not what is abstractly beautiful, or what pleases her best, but what will best decorate the object under consideration, and is most suitable to it.

How errors may be avoided, and fruitless labor saved.

This question, which she should ask herself, will guard her against many errors, and will save her much fruitless toil and labor. She will be brought to consider how her task may be accomplished with the least possible trouble, and to select for this purpose the technical method calculated to insure the quickest, simplest, and most effective results. This leads us to remark that it is a great mistake to suppose that the æsthetical value of an object is in any way determined by the amount of labor expended upon it or the technical difficulties overcome in adorning it. On the contrary, in art the artificial is inadmissible; the simpler and plainer the means, the higher will the success attained through them be valued. What a tedious piece of work it is to fill large spaces, or backgrounds, with minute stitches, and yet a piece of silk or woollen stuff of the same color would serve precisely the same purpose!

Oriental use of "applied" work.

I have used this last illustration with the direct intention of calling attention to the Oriental use of applied embroidery,

Fig. 165



which, being well fitted for larger objects, would enable ladies, with but little trouble, to gradually fill their dwellings with the most beautiful and effective pieces of ornament, such as covers, curtains, pillows, cushions, and the like, and at the same time give them an easy, pleasant, and in no wise tedious occupation. I may assume that this kind of work is well known, especially as examples are here and there to be seen, such as chair-coverings, cushions, and footstools. I allude to the sewing on of variously colored pieces of woollen stuffs, of velvet or silk, to a colored ground, with outlines embroidered in color. The design must of course be beautiful, and the coloring harmonious. These elements are quite sufficient to reach the end aimed at, which is simply to produce an agreeable decorative effect. The pieces may also be combined mosaic fashion, as in Persian covers, but this sort of work is more difficult and troublesome.

Pieces of silk or other material of various colors applied to a colored ground.

These remarks have already brought me within the second of those fields of activity which I have already designated as especially allotted to woman in

The successful adornment of the house as dependent upon the skill and taste of its mistress.

CHAP. X.

the following out of her æsthetic mission. This second field is the artistically harmonious adornment of her house, which depends partly upon her handiwork and partly upon her choice of objects.

It is hardly necessary for me to point out in detail where and how universally the hand of woman can make itself felt in the embellishment of the house. There can be no doubt that every lady desires (although there may often be reasons which prevent her from doing so) to decorate the rooms in which she lives with the work of her own hands, and to make otherwise vacant places attractive to the eye by some pleasing object. We know also from daily experience that the feminine mind is very intelligent in such matters. In spite of all this our dwellings continually show us mistakes committed, toil and labor expended upon useless and unmeaning knick-knacks, or wasted, often on a large scale, in wrong places. I will not again speak of offences against style in embroidery, but will content myself with citing such examples only as lamp-mats and footstools, to which artistic decoration is applied in places where it either cannot be seen at all, or else is condemned to be ignominiously soiled and destroyed. Artistic productions of this class are made to be seen; their end and aim is beauty of outward appearance, and appearance is for the eye. On the other hand, we must not forget that domestic utensils are for practical use and not for show, and that they must therefore combine utility with beauty.

Works of art are intended to be seen, and should therefore not be placed out of sight.

It also seems to me, generally speaking, that embroidery is used altogether too little in the decoration of the dwelling, and that, whenever it is so employed, it is hampered by unnecessary difficulties, resulting from the tedious technical methods adopted. This might easily be avoided. As an example of it, take those comparatively large rugs worked in cross-stitch with Berlin wool, whose delicate nature, want of thickness and strength, make them ill adapted to the purposes for which they are intended; for, although diligent and nimble fingers have been at work upon them for months, and sometimes even for years, they are rapidly worn out. One

Embroidery might be more extensively and more judiciously used for the adornment of the dwelling than it is.



PART OF AN EMBROIDERED SCREEN. SPANISH.

17th Century.

cannot help regretting the time, toil, and labor expended upon them, when he considers that rugs which are artistically as well as practically superior to them can be woven with less trouble and in a much simpler manner. Embroidery is a delicate art, unfit for the decoration of large surfaces. When, however, it undertakes such a task, it must do so in a certain sense from the point of view of monumental art, and instead of spreading pieces of embroidery on the floor and under our feet, must adapt them to places where they will be protected.

The delicate nature of embroidery renders it unfit for the decoration of large surfaces.

Even for small mats, back-cloths, pillows, cushions, and chair-covers, cross-stitch and point-work are, as a rule, too tedious and time-consuming processes. Think only of the variety of objects which might be executed in the time saved by the adoption of some simpler technical method, capable of yielding equally satisfactory artistic results! How easy to decorate lambrequins, curtains of all kinds, rugs and covers, beautifully and yet simply, by means of colored borders, braids, and cords; how rich the effects that may be produced on them by applied embroidery, provided only that we know what is wanted, and are convinced that it is not the labor expended upon an object which determines its artistic value, but its beauty as a result.

The use of applied work, braids and cords, preferable to cross-stitch and point-work, even for small objects.

It is, however, absolutely necessary that in all cases there should be a perfectly clear comprehension of the aim to be reached, for in work of this kind nothing must be done for its own sake, no pattern selected simply for its beauty, and no color because it happens to please, for otherwise it will often happen that the pattern or the color, when fixed in its place, not being in harmony with its surroundings, will ruin all our good intentions. It is evident, therefore, that to attain a good result all things must be selected and made with reference, not only to the places they are intended to decorate, but with reference also to the complete artistic harmony of their surroundings. This, of course, demands an artistically trained eye, capable of taking in at a glance the æsthetic possibilities of a given space, and of using them so as to make them conduce to the general artistic harmony. It is not sufficient to

Patterns and colors must be selected with reference to harmony with surrounding objects.

CHAP. X.

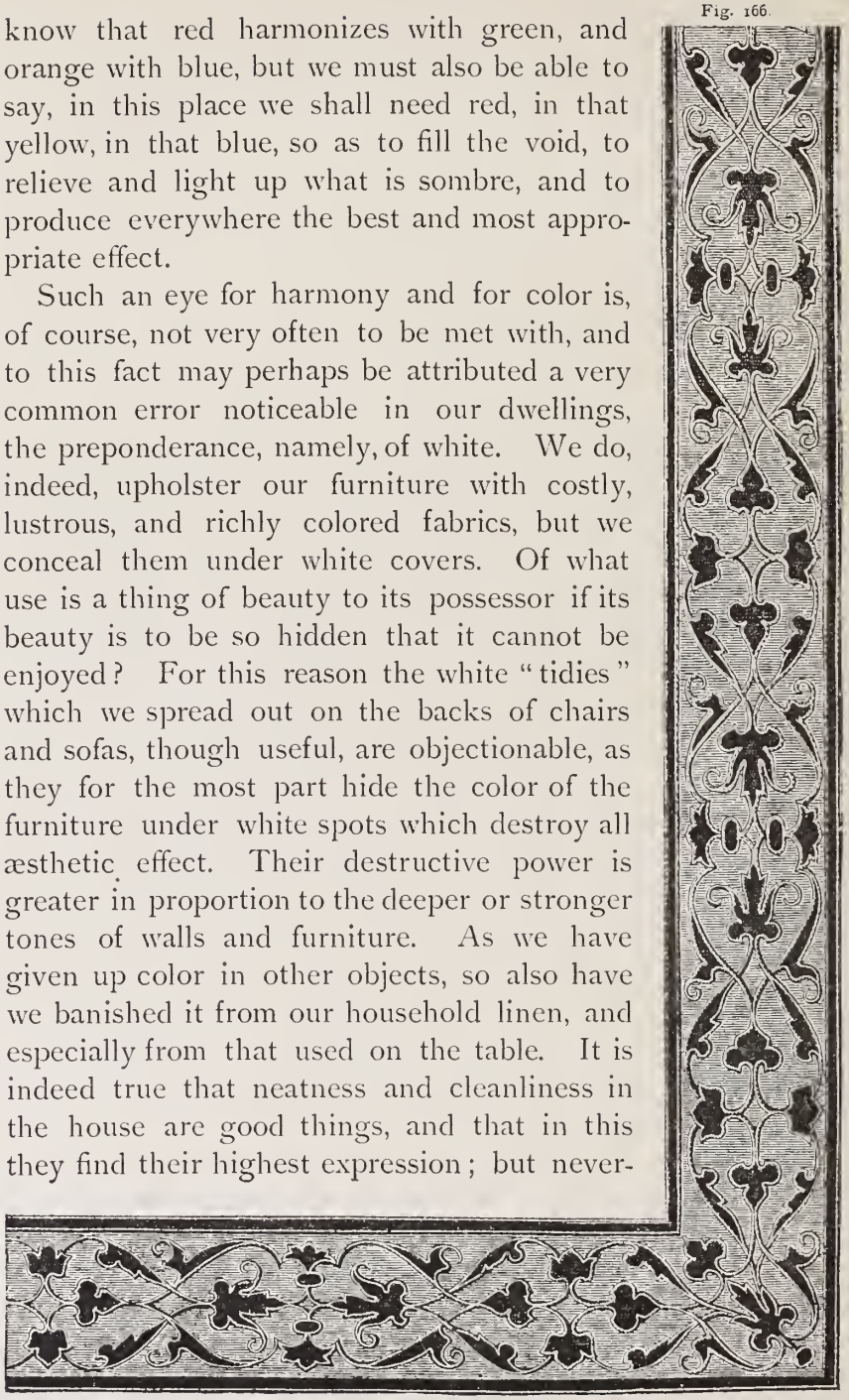
know that red harmonizes with green, and orange with blue, but we must also be able to say, in this place we shall need red, in that yellow, in that blue, so as to fill the void, to relieve and light up what is sombre, and to produce everywhere the best and most appropriate effect.

A perfect eye for color and artistic harmony is rare.

Such an eye for harmony and for color is, of course, not very often to be met with, and to this fact may perhaps be attributed a very common error noticeable in our dwellings, the preponderance, namely, of white. We do, indeed, upholster our furniture with costly, lustrous, and richly colored fabrics, but we conceal them under white covers. Of what use is a thing of beauty to its possessor if its beauty is to be so hidden that it cannot be enjoyed? For this reason the white "tidies" which we spread out on the backs of chairs and sofas, though useful, are objectionable, as they for the most part hide the color of the furniture under white spots which destroy all æsthetic effect. Their destructive power is greater in proportion to the deeper or stronger tones of walls and furniture. As we have given up color in other objects, so also have we banished it from our household linen, and especially from that used on the table. It is indeed true that neatness and cleanliness in the house are good things, and that in this they find their highest expression; but never-

Color desirable in household linen, and especially in that used for the table.

Fig. 166.



theless it is not necessary to carry puritanism about color to the extent to which it has been carried in this particular. There are æsthetic reasons enough why we should do well to use color for the decoration of linen, as in past times. We might adorn table and bed in a variety of charming ways, and thus provide constant employment for female hands, whose works would be a daily source of fresh delight to the eye. The lady of the house will more especially have need of an æsthetically trained eye and an all-embracing judgment, where she does not work with her own hand, but is called upon to act in matters where selection and artistic direction are concerned, such as in the decoration of walls, the selection of colors, of furniture, and of carpets, as well as the arrangement, position, and distribution of the various household objects. As the mistress of the house she must accustom herself to look upon her rooms in all their details as pictures in which all things are so placed and combined as to contribute to the general artistic effect. Symmetry should not be too pronounced in a picture, and yet a conscious arrangement should make itself felt through main groups and subordinate groups, balance of masses, distribution of light and shade, harmony of colors, united by the predominance of a general hue. So should it be in a dwelling. There, also, no one object exists for itself alone, but in reference to all other objects. If the lady of the house has accustomed herself to view things in this light, she will soon perceive where there is a discord and where perfect harmony is attained: she will be able to recognize the chief place which ought to dominate the rest; to see where there is too much or too little; where there is a gap needing to be filled up with some object or work of art; what object is superfluous, or ought to be removed because it is out of proportion with its surroundings; where and how this or that piece of work may be used to best advantage. She will soon become capable of deciding which hues and tints she may select in harmony with her individual taste for walls and furniture, and which other hues may be contrasted with these fundamental colors of the decoration so as to pro-

The lady of the house should regard the rooms in it as pictures, in which all objects are to be brought into harmony with each other.

The importance of an enlightened judgment and a cultivated taste.

CHAP. X.

The task which must be performed is beset with difficulties.

The agreeable effect of a room does not depend upon the richness of its decoration, but upon the taste with which its materials have been selected and arranged.

duce the best possible effect. This is by no means an easy task, for whose success or failure the mistress of the house must be held responsible. The different impressions which house interiors make upon us are mainly due to the presence or the absence of this capacity of the eye, this feeling for harmony, this sensibility to artistic effect. We enter a sumptuously furnished drawing-room, wanting neither in gilding, in heavy silks, nor marbles and alabasters, and lo! the atmosphere seems as heavy as lead, a chill runs through our veins, and the hand, or rather the fingers, stretched out towards us, appears to be offered in compliance with the laws of politeness and the customs of society, but not from any prompting of the heart. We enter another dwelling which has no trace of the wealth and luxury of the first, and yet a sense of comfort steals over us; we feel the hearty pressure of the hand even before it touches our own, we are convinced that we are welcome, and cannot bear to depart. Why is this? It is because a poetical, intelligent mind has been at work here, and has united warm, pleasant hues of color in cheerful harmony, — a gentle, amiable person, who has the faculty of making herself and others comfortable, has so arranged the chairs and other pieces of furniture that they invite to conversation; has agreeably filled corners, walls, and tables with flowers and plants and with works of love and of art, modest though they may be. There, on the contrary, fashion only has been consulted; the upholsterer has undertaken to furnish the house, he has followed his usual insipid routine, without consulting the wishes and feelings of the gentleman and the lady of the house, who have had nothing to say in the matter, either because they did not understand it, or did not think it worth the trouble to consider it. This latter mode of proceeding may be said to be the rule in the furnishing of the more pretentious class of apartments. By adopting it, however, we not only deprive ourselves of an agreeable and pleasurable occupation, but we also renounce all certainty of success, as the artisan and the decorator are dependent upon fashion, and the fashion of to-day, at least, is indifferent to beauty.

Where fashion has been followed without any regard to or expression of individual taste, the effect must be cold and insipid.

It is true that there are upholsterers and decorative artists who rise above fashion and can both understand and carry out artistic intentions. But if we are not ourselves able to appreciate them, to recognize and to value that which is truly good and tasteful, we shall find, like a certain lady whom we have in mind, that even with the best of will, with good intentions and copious means, our efforts have ended in nothing but annoyance and vexation. This lady desired to accomplish something in the decoration and furnishing of her new grand drawing-roms which should rise above the ordinary level of modern tastelessness, and for this purpose addressed herself to the best workmen, and unfortunately not only to one but to several. Being herself without knowledge and judgment in such matters, and incapable of deciding between different views and aims, now taking advice from one and then from the other, and following neither, she was in a perpetually discontented, wavering state of mind. Having caused the costly painted ceiling to be taken down because it did not suit the wall-paper, and changed the wall-paper because the furniture did not harmonize with it, she finally reached an unsatisfactory result, which gave pleasure neither to herself nor to others.

The mistress of the house must be able to recognize and value that which is good and tasteful, for otherwise with the best workmen she will run the risk of failing in her efforts to secure a good result.

This illustration shows us that the ideal mission of woman, as a promoter of the beautiful, has also its practical subjective side. The want of a feeling for beauty occasionally brings heavy retribution, and this is another reason, which, added to those of an ideal nature, should lead us to develop it with special care. We now know, if we remember what has been said, that modern culture indispensably demands the fostering of a sense of beauty in ourselves; that it is necessary for the sake of the education of our children, whose æsthetic perceptions are generally corrupted from early infancy by bad picture-books and tasteless surroundings; we know that in cultivating this feeling for beauty we are doing our part towards working out the civilization of the future, little as the part may be which any individual can contribute towards it; and finally we know that it will open up to us a source of pleasure and of enjoyment during the whole of our lives.

Woman's mission has a practical as well as an ideal side.

Reasons why we should carefully cultivate the sense of beauty in ourselves and in our children.

These are surely reasons enough to make us attach the highest importance to woman's æsthetic mission. Let us not, however, be led to suppose that the comprehension of the beautiful will come of itself; on the contrary, toil and practice will be required, and this all the more for the reason that we do not grow up in the midst of beautiful things as our predecessors did, who lived in happier art-epochs, and because our taste is perverted by the present fashions in dress, in industries, and even in art. The beautiful has a language of its own, and this language must be learned like any other. He, however, who has learned it, and knows how to use it, has — to borrow the language of Goethe — tasted of that nectar which Minerva brought down from Heaven to her favorite Prometheus, and thus has his part in the highest happiness, — in Art.

The language of the beautiful must be mastered, like any other language, by diligent and patient toil.



LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

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